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REVALUING SCRIPTURE

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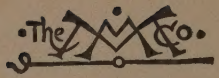

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REVALUING SCRIPTURE

By

FRANK EAKIN, PH.D.
Author of "Getting Acquainted with the New Testament."

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PREFACE

THIS book is intended as an aid to the understanding and profitable use of Bibles. More specifically, my desire and aim in writing it have been to help adherents of the Jewish-Christian Bible—of whom I am one—to orient themselves better as to the nature and value of their Bible by looking at it in comparison with other Scriptures.

It has long seemed strange to me that more use was not made of this comparative approach. The comparative study of languages and religions is still young, yet almost no one any longer questions its propriety and necessity. In fact it has become a commonplace of our scientific outlook that we do not pretend to understand things until we have looked at them in the light of their likeness and unlikeness to other related things. But with regard to Bibles surprisingly little use has hitherto been made of this established method. The standard works on the Christian doctrine of Scripture for the most part calmly ignore the existence of other Scriptures, and with few exceptions this has been the attitude also of writers of apologetic, introductory, and expository books and articles having to do with matters

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Biblical. In the excellent historical and descriptive works on the world's great religions which have appeared in recent years—such as those of A. S. Geden, G. F. Moore, and others—materials are to be found which aid in a comparative study of Bibles, but the subject itself is discussed scantily if at all. Books of the type of C. H. Toy's *Introduction to the History of Religions,* J. Estlin Carpenter's *Comparative Religion,* and A. G. Widgery's *Comparative Study of Religions* yield somewhat fuller gleanings; but when the utmost use has been made of such aids as these the inquiring student, if he would more than scratch the surface of the subject, will find it necessary to go to the Bibles themselves—as collected in the *Sacred Books of the East* and elsewhere—and make his own observations and comparisons.

My hope for the present book is that it will open up the subject to general readers in a suggestive way, while providing students with a starting point for independent studies. The religious situation in America to-day is admittedly acute, due largely to the impact of a newly acquired scientific outlook on pre-scientific and no longer tenable ideas which have been closely associated with religion and are still thought by many to be inseparable from it. And these ideas, almost without exception, are found or are supposed to be found in our Bible, so that it would scarcely be an exaggeration to

say that these Jewish-Christian Scriptures which we have inherited are the crux of the whole situation. One need not apologize, therefore, for attempting to contribute something to a better understanding of their nature and value through presenting them in their relation to similar phenomena.

Parts I and II may be read independently, though Chapters I-III are needed as an introduction to Part II. Part I (perhaps omitting Chapters II-III) and the concluding Part III will probably be the parts of the book which the general reader will find of greatest interest.

The references in the footnotes will, I hope, provide a useful bibliography for further reading and study. Where books have been quoted the publishers are given, and I wish here to express my thanks for the privilege of quotation.

The substance of Chapters X, XI, and XII was published in advance in the *Journal of Religion,* October, 1927. The editor and publishers have given their kind consent to its being reprinted here.

My grateful acknowledgment is due to Dr. A. Eustace Haydon, Professor of the History of Religions in the University of Chicago, who read the book in manuscript and gave it the benefit of his valuable criticism but who is not in any way responsible for its statements or opinions.

Vineland, N. J. F. E.

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PART I
BIBLES IN GENERAL

REVALUING SCRIPTURE

CHAPTER I

EXTENT OF THE IDEA OF SCRIPTURES

How widespread is the Bible idea? The inquirer is likely to find the testimony of the experts on this point a little puzzling. On the one hand he will read such statements as the following: "All churches and all bodies approaching nearly the church form have writings that embody their beliefs and are regarded as sacred." [1] "Nearly all the higher religions are book religions, i.e. their teaching is deposited in a sacred book, which ranks as a divine revelation." [2] "The lack of definite scriptures—especially after the establishment of writing—seems to imply that the religion is comparatively primitive." [3] But other statements will be met with which seem to be of a different tenor, for example: "There are not many nations which have preserved sacred writings. . . . Neither Greeks, nor Romans, nor

[1] C. H. Toy, *Introduction to the History of Religions* (N.Y., Ginn, 1913), p. 557.

[2] A. Dorner, article "Bibliolatry," in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (N. Y., Scribner, 1908-27), II, 615. (Hereafter referred to as *ERE.*)

[3] A. G. Widgery, *Comparative Study of Religions* (London, Williams, 1923), p. 46.

Germans, nor Celts, nor Slavs have left us anything that deserves the name of Sacred Books." [4] "The 'Bibles of Humanity,' as the foundation books of the great religions have been called, belong to one continent. Asia has been the mother of them all." [5]

Actually there is no contradiction here. The statements may be harmonized in the proposition that the Bible idea, while widely extended, is subject to a two-fold limitation: it is limited to the "higher" religions and to the continent of Asia. But both limitations need a word of comment.

To say that nearly all the higher religions have Bibles, and that the lack of a Bible marks a religion as primitive, may be true and yet be misleading. It may suggest that the non-possession of sacred books is characteristic only of barbarians or savages, but here we have to reckon with Max Müller's inclusion of the Greeks and Romans among the peoples without Bibles. High culture and the so-called higher religions have not always been coextensive. Whether Greece and Rome were better or worse for not having Scriptures we need not now pause to discuss. In either case they stand as examples of highly cultured peoples who did not have the Bible idea.

And the limitation to Asia is a limitation only in origin. This continent has, to a notable extent, been

[4] F. Max Müller, in *Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1879-1910), I, xl. (Hereafter referred to as *SBE.*)
[5] J. Estlin Carpenter, *Comparative Religion* (N.Y., Holt), p. 186.

the mother of Bibles, but her children have wandered far. Christianity, for example, sprang from the soil of Asia. So did Judaism, centuries earlier. Yet it is only a partial truth to speak of the Christian Bible, which combines the Scriptures of these two Asiatic religions, as an Asiatic or Oriental book. It has proved its adaptability to other soils.

The great Bible-producing religions have been Brahmanism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism. The Bible of Brahmanism is an extensive literature called the Vedas, having its origin in India and a range of influence extending but little beyond that land. In India itself the Hinduism which has fallen heir to Brahmanism, claiming the allegiance of more than two-thirds of the vast population, does not have a Scripture recognized by all. Other writings are reverenced as well as the Vedas. The Bible of Buddhism, known as the Tripitaka, also had its birth in India, but it has gone far afield. Its influence is strongly felt in Ceylon, Burmah, Siam and other parts of southern Asia, while in India its adherents are now but a handful. A different type of Buddhism, with a more extensive sacred literature, prevails in Tibet, China, Korea, and Japan. The Zoroastrian Bible is the Avesta (often, though incorrectly, called the Zend-Avesta). Islam has crowded it out of its native land of Persia, and it now has only a few adherents there. The Parsees of India, number-

ing about a hundred thousand and settled mainly in Bombay, are the one considerable group who still hold to the Avesta as their Bible. The Confucian King (Canonical Books) and Shu (Classics) have exerted great influence not only in China, where they were written, but also in Korea and Japan. The Jewish Scriptures, known to Christians as the Old Testament, had their origin in Palestine and Mesopotamia. They have had a range of influence practically equal to that of the Christian "New Testament," with which they have been united. The writings which make up the New Testament were produced at different places in the northeast Mediterranean region. They have made their influence felt throughout Europe, America, Australia, and much of the rest of the world. There is, finally, the Mohammedan Bible: the Koran. Going forth from Arabia it has made itself the sacred book of millions in North Africa, the Near East, Persia, and India.

Such, in a paragraph, is the story of the rise and spread of Bibles. The period covered is a matter of some twenty centuries, from the emergence of the earlier strata of the Vedas to the writing of the Koran, and another dozen centuries is required to bring about the modern situation. Historically the idea of sacred writings has been far from universal among the sons of men, yet thanks largely to the migratory disposition and missionary zeal of Buddhists, Jews, Mohammedans,

and Christians there are few regions on our globe to which Scriptures have not penetrated and where the idea of a unique divine revelation contained in books has not become firmly intrenched.

The zenith would seem to have been reached in the nineteenth century, the era of the last great missionary wave of Christianity. Not much of the world remains to be conquered, as far as nominal acceptance of the idea is concerned. But how real—how thorough—has the conquest been? How important has been the place which these books have made for themselves in religion and in life? And how is it all to be accounted for? What is there in the nature or history of these writings which may help us to understand the remarkable rôle which they have played? To most of the readers of this book "the Bible" means the Jewish-Christian collection included in the Old and New Testaments: to what extent is this just a typical collection of sacred writings, and in what respects if any can uniqueness be claimed for it? And what of the future? Can the Bibles—ours or any other—continue, in a seemingly antagonistic thought-world, to maintain themselves in the position which they hitherto have held? These are some of the questions with which we shall try to deal in the following chapters.*

* I do not mean to deny a place among the Bibles to such sacred books as the Ajamas of the Jains and the Adi-Granth of the Sikhs, not to mention the authoritative literature produced in the nineteenth century by Babism and Behaism, but my present purpose does not require that they be discussed.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL CONTENT AND CHARACTER OF SCRIPTURES

It will be well to get before us at once a bird's-eye view of each of the great Bibles of mankind, reserving further comment and discussion for later chapters. But the impatient reader has the privilege of omitting this chapter and the next, turning back to them later for reference if need be.

The Vedas—the Scriptures of Brahmanism—are not a book but an extensive literature, with limits not clearly defined. There are, to begin with, four collections (sañhitas) of hymns (mantras), that is to say utterances of praise and prayer to deity composed in rhythmic language. These are known as the Rig-Veda, the Yajur-Veda, the Sama-Veda, and the Atharva-Veda, and all of them have a great deal to say about the worship of the gods through sacrifices. Then to each of these are attached, more or less in the guise of commentaries, certain ritual textbooks called Brahmanas, the aim of which is to explain the complex sacrificial ceremonial and give directions for its observance by the priests. And to the Brahmanas in turn are attached the Upanishads, writings devoted to speculative philosophy and theology but thoroughly unsystematic in form. The

hymns are the earliest, the Brahmanas next, and the Upanishads the latest of the books which make up the revelation proper (shruti). Of this mass of material the Rig-Veda, the Atharva-Veda, and the principal Upanishads are most important.

The Rig-Veda is important from the fact that it may be said to have served as the foundation of all subsequent Vedic literature, and because of the poetic merit and lofty religious sentiment of some of its poems. Being of great age it is also of much value as a source book for the history of culture. It consists of more than a thousand hymns, addressed to deities which are personified forces of nature. The reader is reminded at times of Homer or Pindar, at other times of the Hebrew Psalms. The Rig-Veda has to do with the gods of a relatively cultured priestly class. The value of the Atharva-Veda consists particularly in the fact that it represents a more primitive and popular type of religion. For this reason, doubtless, it had trouble winning for itself a place in the company of the more priestly writings. It is "a book of glorified religious magic," [1] made up of prayers, incantations, and charms, for use in all sorts of specified emergencies. At the other side of the Rig-Veda, so to speak, stand the Upanishads, which have been thought to represent the outlook of cultured

[1] A. E. Haydon, article *Sacred Literatures,* in the *Dictionary of Religion and Ethics* (N.Y., Macmillan, 1921), p. 392.

laymen. Here we have a reaching out toward philosophical conceptions of God which make magic and sacrifice alike foolish and ineffectual, and it is noteworthy that these writings have been the chief basis of Indian theological thinking to this day. Nevertheless the priestly outlook dominates the Vedas as a whole. Dissenting points of view have been so reworked or submerged that they scarcely are felt as dissenting.

Outside of the Scripture proper is an extensive Tradition (smriti), of later date but containing some books —e.g. the Bhagavad Gita—which have had an influence comparable with that of the writings regarded as revelation. It is difficult to get a clear idea of the extent of the existing Vedic literature as a whole. A good deal of it is only slightly known even to specialists. The translations in the *Sacred Books of the East,* occupying some seventeen volumes, are far from complete. Bloomfield's *Vedic Concordance* has references to about a hundred and twenty different writings.

The Avesta stands in linguistic and racial relationship to the Vedas, both being products of the Indo-Iranian stock which separated at some time before 1000 B.C. to form the Aryan peoples of India and Persia. It was originally an extensive literature like the Vedas, but much of it has been lost. The total bulk of what remains is scarcely greater than that of the Rig-Veda, or of the Iliad and Odyssey combined. In the *Sacred*

Books of the East three volumes—936 pages—are given to it. In its present form it is therefore only a moderately extensive Scripture.

The oldest part of the Avesta, as in the case of the Vedas, consists of poetic religious utterances. They are called the Gathas. There are seventeen of them—nine hundred lines in all. The background which they reveal is that of a prophet and reformer of religion who is encountering scorn and hostility and seeks divine assurance and guidance in his difficult task. The tradition that they come from Zarathustra (Zoroaster) himself is probably to be accepted as valid. The Gathas differ from the hymns of the Rig-Veda in that they are not priestly in origin, that is, were not originally concerned with sacrifice or ritual. But they have been turned to priestly uses. In the Avesta they are preceded and followed by chapters of liturgical matter, mostly invocations, the whole forming the Yasna. To this is added a further liturgical appendix, the Vispered.

Another of the main parts of the Avesta is the Vendidad, a priestly law code which has sometimes been likened to the Old Testament book of Leviticus. It begins with a creation story and proceeds, in later chapters, with elaborate directions for purification and expiation, penalties for various crimes, etc. Things ethical and ceremonial, important and unimportant, are mixed in strange fashion. The Yashts, which constitute

a fourth main section of the Avesta, are a collection of poetic utterances addressed to various "angels," twenty-one in all. These are comparable with the nature gods of the Rig-Veda. The Yashts are of much later date than the Gathas and on a lower religious level, but the mythological and legendary matter interwoven in the poems has interest and value for the history of Iranian culture. Like the other parts of the Avesta, the Yashts are recited in connection with the ritual of worship.

As a whole the Avesta has the aspect of a Scripture which has been adapted to service as a prayer book and hymn book. Even the Vendidad, which might from its nature seem poorly suited to use in worship, is said to be recited from beginning to end at a solemn ceremony which starts at midnight and lasts through many hours.[2]

In addition to the four main parts the Avesta includes also some minor texts and fragments, and there is an extensive body of later Tradition regarded as possessing a secondary sacredness. Translations from it occupy five volumes of the *Sacred Books of the East.*

The Tripitaka may be called a daughter of the Vedas, as the Avesta is a sister. Gautama the Buddha, to whose life and work the Tripitaka owes its existence, lived in India at about the time when the last of the

[2] See J. H. Moulton, *The Treasure of the Magi* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1917), p. 137.

Vedic books which make up the revelation proper were being written. Gautama himself, though not a priest, must have been taught from the Vedas in his youth.

Tripitaka means "Three Baskets." The Buddhist Scriptures include a large number of writings, mostly short, classified in three groups: the Sutta-pitaka, the Vinaya-pitaka, and the Abhidhamma-pitaka. The total bulk is said to be approximately twice that of the Jewish-Christian Bible, though if the numerous repetitions were eliminated the bulk would be greatly reduced.[8] But we are not to think of the Tripitaka, any more than the Vedas, as existing in a compact volume or set of volumes with a definite arrangement and contents. It is known in its parts rather than as a whole, some parts are much better known than others, and there is not universal agreement as to all that should be included.

The Sutta-pitaka is the oldest and most important of the groups. Gautama had made much use in his teaching of *sutras* (*suttas*), i.e. short sayings easily memorized. Upon these he enlarged at different times and in different ways, and after his death they were collected, variously arranged, and further enlarged upon. Such is the root matter of the Sutta-pitaka: discourses on religious, philosophical, and ethical subjects attributed to the Buddha or in a few cases to one of his

[8] See Pierre D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Manual of the Science of Religion*, tr. by B. S. Colyer-Fergusson (London, Longmans, 1891), p. 570.

disciples and often set in a framework of narrative. There is also a great deal of material in verse form, including pregnant thoughts, ecstatic utterances, and folk stories. Especially noteworthy is the Dhammapada, a short anthology in which early Buddhism's outlook on life is beautifully and effectively set forth. A different kind of interest attaches to the Jataka, a remarkable collection of five hundred and fifty old tales of the Aesop variety which have been adapted to serve the needs of Buddhist instruction. Gautama, in former existences, is made to play the hero rôle in the stories.

The second "basket," the Vinaya-pitaka, has to do mainly with regulations for the outward life of Buddhist monks and nuns. Offenses are dealt with first, four being listed as calling for expulsion (sexual indulgence, theft, destruction of life, undue claims of spiritual insight or exaltation), and long lists of others as requiring expiation of one sort or another. These regulations are meant to be read at fortnightly meetings, at which guilty members of the order should confess. Other parts of the Vinaya contain detailed rules of conduct, often with a narrative setting which purports to relate the circumstances under which the Blessed One propounded the rules.

The Abhidhamma-pitaka is the latest and most scholastic of the three groups. Its materials are largely a

rehandling of matters already treated in the Sutta-pitaka.

Here as elsewhere we have a closely allied body of literature outside the Scriptures proper. Included in this is the Milinda-panha, one of the earliest known examples of the historical novel, "Milinda" being the Greek-Indian king Menander. Mahayana Buddhism—flourishing in Tibet, China, and Japan—has been especially prolific in the production of sacred writings, a favorite theme being legends about the Buddha.[4]

The Chinese sacred writings—the five King and the four Shu—have no such relation with the Vedas, the Avesta, and the Tripitaka as these three bodies of Scripture have with one another. The King and Shu stand in close connection with the life and work of the great sage Confucius, and Confucius lived at the same time as Gautama. But the two teachers had no contact, and the Buddhist and Chinese Scriptures did not influence each other in the period of their formation. It was not until later that Buddhism established itself in China.

The word Shu here means Books, or Classics, while King signifies that which is held to be standard, norma-

[4] For a full analysis of the contents of the Tripitaka see A. S. Geden, *Studies in the Religions of the East* (London, Kelly, 1913), pp. 469ff. Examples of Mahayana sacred books containing Buddha legends are the Lalita-vistara and the Buddha-charita. Particularly important for their influence on the Buddhism of the Far East are the Saddharma-pundarika, or "Lotus of the True Law," and the Sukhavati-vyuha, which has to do with the gracious Amitabha and his paradise.

tive, obligatory. This suggests, what is the fact, that the King hold somewhat higher rank than the Shu. But the Shu, being more popular in character, are more widely read and probably exert the greater total of influence. The Chinese student under the old regime began his studies with the Shu, reserving the King until he had attained greater proficiency.

The Shu-King, or Book of History, contains the record of acts and sayings attributed to kings and ministers belonging to a succession of ancient Chinese dynasties. Much of the space is given to "Speeches," "Instructions," "Announcements," and "Charges." Naturally the history is mixed with legend, especially in the earlier parts, and the whole is written from a didactic point of view. The Shih-King, or Book of Poetry, is a miscellaneous anthology of verse, containing three hundred and five pieces in all. Most of them deal with matters political, showing much concern for righteous dealing on the part of those in control of the government. A good many are odes sung in connection with sacrifices. There are also battle songs, drinking songs, and love lyrics. The Li-Ki, or Book of Rites, is an extensive work on etiquette and conduct in general. It has to do not only with the proper performance of sacrifices and mourning rites, and the way in which a subject should conduct himself when in the presence of royalty, but with a multitude of other matters of

behavior as well. The book is largely an explanation and defense of *Ceremony*—a phase of life which to the Chinese mind is nearly of supreme importance. The Yi-King, or Book of Divination, is literally a Chinese puzzle, with a variety of solutions thereof. The starting point of the whole work is a group of sixty-four hexagrams: six horizontal lines, broken and unbroken, arranged in sixty-four different combinations. To each of these a little essay is attached explaining its meaning and use in determining what should or should not be done by the inquirer, and in extensive appendices these explanations are further enlarged upon by other writers. The remaining King, known as the Ch'un Ch'iu, consists of brief chronicles of the feudal state of Lu covering the years 722 to 484 B.C.

The last-named book is said to have been written by Confucius, who was a citizen of Lu and held a number of state offices. With the other four King the sage perhaps had an editorial connection, but probably his most important influence on the sacred writings as a whole came through his own high estimation of them and his recommending them to his disciples. The greater part of their contents had existed before his time. The earliest documents of the Shu-King may go back to a period two thousand years before Christ.

Of the four Shu two—the Ta-hsueh (Great Learning) and Chung-Yung (Doctrine of the Mean)—are

comparatively brief sections which have been extracted from the Li-Ki and circulated separately. They are treatises on worthy character and conduct, especially on the part of rulers. The Chung-Yung in particular may be considered a compendium of the Confucian philosophy of life. It is made up largely of reputed sayings of the sage, said to have been compiled by his grandson. The remaining Shu are the Lun-Yu (Analects, Discussions), which contains discourses of Confucius recorded in a manner roughly similar to the discourses of Jesus in the non-Markan sections of Matthew's and Luke's Gospels, and Meng-tsze, a book having to do with the life and teaching of the philosopher Mencius, a follower of Confucius who lived about a century and a half later.

The Hsiao-King (Book of Filial Piety) is another important classic, not included with the King and Shu. As the title indicates it stresses reverence for parents as the key virtue, an idea frequently met with also in the other classics. The Tao-Teh-King—a Taoist rather than a Confucian classic—is a small book of maxims and reflections attributed to the philosopher Lao-Tze, who was a contemporary of Confucius in China.[5]

[5] In a fuller treatment of Chinese Scriptures it would be necessary to give attention to the Taoist classics as developed by Lao-tse and Chuang-tzse, also to the later "Book of Rewards and Punishments" which has an important place in popular Taoism.

CHAPTER III

GENERAL CONTENT AND CHARACTER OF SCRIPTURES (*Continued*)

THE Jewish Scriptures, like the Chinese, are almost entirely independent. They have no historical connection with the Vedas, the Tripitaka, or the Confucian books. Some influence from the Avesta is perhaps to be seen in the later parts, written during or after the forced sojourn of the Jews in lands under Persian control. More than half of this Bible is narrative, a fourth is given over to "prophetic" writings, and the remainder is miscellaneous. (The threefold division into Law, Prophets, and Writings is ignored in most Christian editions. It has importance only as reflecting the order in which different groups of books came to be regarded as Scripture.) The entire collection can be bound in a volume of moderate size.

The narrative begins in Genesis with mythical accounts of creation and proceeds with legends of the origin and development of the Hebrew race. Farther on the historical basis becomes more substantial, especially in the books of Samuel and Kings; but in Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, which are of later date, the

facts have been colored and embellished by reason of the author's priestly interest. The narrative section as a whole contains much genuine history, but it is written from a didactic rather than a historical point of view. It is very repetitious, due largely to the overlapping of different sources. Particularly prominent rôles are played by the ancestral heroes Abraham and Jacob, the lawgiver Moses, and the great kings David and Solomon.

In the prophetic section we have exhortations, denunciations, appeals, threatenings, and ecstatic utterances, by religio-ethical reformers. From their nature, and from the fact that the occasion of their original production has usually not been preserved, they are often hard to understand; but they repay study, as they reveal great personalities and the spiritual and ethical value of their contents is high. The apocalyptic book of Daniel is related to the prophets but is of different character, its dominant note being the expectation of a speedy and cataclysmic divine intervention for the righting of intolerable wrongs which the Jews were suffering.

The miscellaneous matter is relatively late, but it has high merit as compared with the late part of other Scriptures. It includes a notable book of religious poetry (Psalms), a collection of ethical maxims (Proverbs), a couple of books which present something approaching a speculative philosophy (Job and Ecclesi-

astes), and a number of short stories (Ruth, Esther, Jonah). These last were written, as were the historical narratives, because the writers had lessons to teach.

Outside the Scriptures proper—in the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, and the Talmud—are large bodies of semi-sacred literature.

Christianity, originating as a Jewish sect, adopted the Hebrew Bible as its own, adding to it a collection of new writings of about one-third its bulk, nearly all of which show familiarity with and dependence on the old Scriptures. This "New Testament," like the Old, opens with a succession of books narrating the beginnings of the movement, which books embrace more than half of the collection. These are the four Gospels and the book of Acts. The Gospels have to do with the life of the Founder, Jesus of Nazareth, the first three fixing attention on him as the Messiah of a speedily coming apocalyptic Kingdom, while the fourth concerns itself with his significance as a divine being who has come to mediate a mystical salvation to men. The book of Acts consists of accounts of the beginnings of organized Christianity after Jesus' death, together with a narrative of the conversion and subsequent missionary activities of Saul of Tarsus, the second founder of the movement—henceforth to be known as the Apostle Paul.

There follows a group of twenty-one "epistles," of

varying length, the subject matter ranging from common-sense advice in matters of conduct, through impassioned exhortations to sanity, brotherliness, and orthodoxy, to speculative theology. About half of them—the earlier, more spontaneous, and more important half—were written or dictated by Paul as a by-product of his evangelistic touring. These are the earliest writings in the New Testament, and it is from them, supplemented by matter from Acts, that we get nearly all of our information about the first stage of the transition of Christianity from a Jewish sect to a world religion. As recognized products of the first generation of the movement they have a historical value that is nearly unique. The other epistles belong mostly to a later period. They show less originality, and are more concerned with orthodoxy and prescribed ethics. They have more the aspect of tracts or sermons than of real letters.

The collection closes with an apocalpyse, the book of Revelation, modeled after the Daniel of the Jewish Bible. Here visions of the destruction of the Christians' enemies are followed by vivid word-pictures of the New Jerusalem, where God's people shall no longer experience tears and mourning, pain and death. But the real climax of New Testament thought is to be found in the Fourth Gospel, in which the attempt is made to gather together the elements of Christian

tradition and experience, as developed at about the close of the first century, into such a conception and program as will meet the needs of the new Gentile environment. In particular, the writer's effort is to harmonize the figure of the Christ of developing Christian experience with that of the Jesus of oral and written tradition.

There were hangers-on to this collection—including a couple of additional gospels, some more epistles, and another apocalypse or two—but they did not succeed in retaining much prestige. Some of them have been preserved while of others only fragments are extant. In later centuries, however, the Christian church followed precedent in developing a body of Tradition to stand beside its Scriptures.

We come finally to the Koran, the latest and smallest of the great Bibles. Its total bulk is a little less than that of the Christian New Testament; its date is five to six centuries later. It is markedly dependent on the Jewish and Christian Bibles, as the New Testament is dependent on the Old; but Islam did not follow the precedent of Christianity in adopting the earlier Scriptures as well as using them in the making of its new Bible.

The Koran is the work of one man, the Arabian prophet Mohammed, who delivered its contents orally as divine revelations sent through him to his fellow-

countrymen and to mankind in general—indeed to the jinn (spirits) as well. It was cast into written form by followers of the prophet, some parts before and some after his death. There is no division into books, as in the case of other Scriptures. The one hundred and fourteen surahs (chapters) which make up the entire contents are independent of each other, like the hundred and fifty psalms which compose the Old Testament book of Psalms. Moreover the longer surahs are themselves far from being units as regards subject matter: in nearly all of them the subject shifts from one thing to another and back again.

The dominant subject in the Koran is eschatology: judgment, resurrection, hell, heaven—vividly pictured. The time of the great denouement is unknown to the prophet, but it is not far distant.[1] The dominant tone is one of exhortation and warning, often rising to invective. Against the "tritheism" of Christians and the idolatrous polytheism of the Arabian tribes there is much insistence that God is one and has no sons or daughters.

In pointing the warnings much use is made of legendary narrative—a good deal of it from Jewish and Christian, some from native Arabian, sources. The element of law and ethical precept is large, the requirements often being minute and specific but not being

[1] See Koran 78:40; 17:53; 33:63.

compiled into formal codes. There are terse ecstatic utterances in the shorter surahs and there is much repetitious and prolix discussion in the longer ones. The arrangement of the surahs—long ones first and short ones last—has no reference either to the subject matter or to the place of the particular revelation in Mohammed's career. When rearranged in an order more nearly corresponding with that of their origin, out of the vicissitudes of the prophet's experience, they give somewhat less the impression of chaos.

For the most part the Koran has the aspect of a polemic book—directed against Mohammed's fellow-townsmen at Mecca who declined to take his claims at face value, against the "hypocrites" who held aloof from him at Medinah, against Jews and Christians, and against individuals who have incurred the prophet's hostility. However, much attention is also given to the strengthening of the morale of believers and providing them with practical guidance, while the whole is composed in a rhetorical prose style suited to ritual worship.

It may be added that there are also various collections of Tradition, some of which are accepted by the Sunnites —the leading Mohammedan sect—as practically of equal authority with the Koran.

So much for the roll-call of the great Bibles. Clearly one of the outstanding characteristics which they pos-

sess in common is the extremely miscellaneous nature of their contents. This applies to the Vedas, which are a great literature, and it applies at the other extreme to the Koran, which is a small book. Says Widgery:

> An examination of sacred scriptures suggests that they are collections of early stories, hymns, prayers, cosmological ideas, prophetic exhortations, moral precepts, the lives of saints, directions for the performance of rites and ceremonies, together often with historical narratives relating particularly to the peoples amongst whom the scriptures have arisen.[2]

This is a fairly adequate summary. Scriptures are "collections"—their contents miscellaneous and largely fragmentary, yet showing much similarity one to another in general features. The prominent place occupied by poetry and rhythmic or rhetorical prose; the prevalence of myth, legend, and story, and of narrative which has a historical foundation but which is more concerned with driving home a moral than with the accurate statement of fact; the inclusion of ecstatic utterances, of ethical maxims and exhortations, and often of speculative theology, eschatology, and philosophy; the extent to which the materials are designed to give directions for or to play a part in the ritual of worship—these are

[2] A. G. Widgery, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

some of the most general characteristics. Also noteworthy is the fact that a body of Tradition is almost always present as a supplement to Scripture.

Yet notwithstanding the inclusiveness of their contents it is characteristic of most Scriptures that they are one-sided in their outlook and emphasis. It is most commonly a priestly one-sidedness, evidenced by an excessive concern with sacrifice and ritual; but in the Tripitaka it is the point of view of monks that dominates, while in the King and Shu nearly everything revolves around the state and the family. The Koran is above all else a prophetic Scripture, the big idea being that of coming judgment. This idea also looms large in the Christian Scriptures, but the New Testament is less dominated by it than the Koran. On the whole it would seem that the Jewish Bible is least chargeable with one-sidedness—it shows the widest range of outlook and preserves the best balance.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORIGIN OF SCRIPTURES

THREE stages may be distinguished in the origin of Scriptures: (1) the production of the writings; (2) the disposition to regard them as sacred; and (3) the further disposition to "fence in" the portion of the literary heritage regarded as especially sacred and claim for it unique divine authority.

The first stage is often difficult if not impossible to trace, but this is not to say that the matter is enveloped in mystery. In the case of some of the units of the later Scriptures it is possible to get a clear view of the circumstances of origin. This applies, for example, to most of the letters of Paul in the New Testament and to many of the surahs of the Koran. Here the internal evidence of the writings themselves may be supplemented by information derived from other writings or from oral tradition in such a way as to yield fairly definite and certain results. Even writings of much greater antiquity than Paul's letters or Mohammed's surahs usually reveal much of the secret of their origin when scientific methods of literary and historical criticism are applied to them. Thus the hymns of the

Rig-Veda are seen to be survivals of the poetic literature produced by the early Aryan settlers in India. They reflect the life of those pioneers at numerous points and in many aspects. In like manner the prophetic books of the Old Testament—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.—are known to be products of the period of the late monarchy and the immediately following exile period of Hebrew history. The origin of particular books or parts of books can be located more or less definitely within the general period.

It is characteristic of most Scriptures that they contain a relatively small nucleus of early material—spontaneous in character and likely to be rhythmic in form, an instinctive expression of the primitive thought and life of the race or sect—to which has been added, often over a period of centuries, an accretion of more labored and formal explanation, discussion, amplification, application. This is seen on the largest scale in the Scriptures of the Brahmanists, where the hymns of the Rig-Veda serve as a nucleus for much of the matter in the other Mantras, as well as in the Brahmanas and Upanishads. Related to this phenomenon is the way in which many of the writings which compose the Scriptures of Buddhism and of Christianity have developed from a small nucleus of tradition as to the deeds and sayings of the respective founders, Gautama the Buddha and Jesus the Christ. Even the

Koran, the work of one man, shows such development. The early surahs are brief, tense, emotional, poetic; the later ones tend to be longer, more sermonic, more prosy. The prophet sometimes deals over again with the matter of earlier revelations, supplementing or even abrogating it. To say that the later strata of Scriptures are inferior in value to the earlier would perhaps be too sweeping a statement. Much depends on one's definition of value. But in general it may be said that writings characterized by emotional spontaneity are likely to stand the test of time better than those which attempt to prescribe minute rules for conduct or settle the problems of the universe by argument, while genuine reminiscences of a great historical person often have an appeal which is lacking in the most grandiose of later embellishments.

This leads us to the second stage. How have these miscellaneous collections of writings attained the high rank ascribed to them? How did they come to be regarded as *sacred?* Study of the contents of the great Scriptures does not suggest a ready answer to this question. On the contrary it tends rather to raise the question in more acute form.

> Readers who have been led to believe that the Vedas of the ancient Brahmans, the Avesta of the Zoroastrians, the Tripitaka of the Buddhists, the Kings of Confucius, or the Koran of Moham-

> med are books full of primeval wisdom and religious enthusiasm, or at least of sound and simple moral teaching, will be disappointed on consulting these volumes. . . . I confess it has been for many years a problem to me, aye, and to a great extent is so still, how the Sacred Books of the East should, by the side of so much that is fresh, natural, simple, beautiful, and true, contain so much that is not only unmeaning, artificial, and silly, but even hideous and repellent.[1]

Thus writes Max Müller, who knew the great Scriptures of the East as few have known them. The Jewish-Christian Scriptures of course are not included in this estimate. In a later connection I shall compare them with the others. For the present it will suffice to say that few enlightened Jews or Christians of our time can think of *all* parts of their Scriptures as in any very deep sense sacred. How did a sacred character come to be ascribed to them?

There would seem to be a tendency among nearly all peoples to feel an awesome regard for whatever heritage they have of ancient lore. This in itself will go far toward answering the question. And other kinds of awe also are to be included in the reckoning, for example the awe of writing and the awe of great personality. It is no doubt true that the more primitive

[1] Max Müller, *SBE* I, xi-xii.

the culture the greater is the force with which these feelings operate, but even in a culture such as that of our present-day Western world it is easy to find evidence of them. There are men and women all around us who still feel that what they have read "in a book" has a stamp of validity which a mere oral statement would not have. As to the awe attaching to great personality we have only to think of the prestige which attaches, in the mind of nearly all Americans, to sayings attributed to Washington or Lincoln. And, once more, the resentment which Americans feel at any attempt to show that the accepted accounts of the glorious deeds of our national heroes have been "touched up" will serve to illustrate how quickly the inherited lore of a people may take on a sacred character. It is worth remarking in this connection that the Jews and the Arabs, who have gone farther than any other peoples in developing and applying the idea of Scriptures, have been peoples with a particularly strong national pride and race consciousness.

It is not surprising, then, that in India the Vedas should have been held sacred, in Persia the Avesta, in China the King and Shu, and among the Hebrews the Law and the Prophets. These Scriptures embody the myths, the legends, and the inherited wisdom of the races which have cherished them; they are deeply rooted in the racial history and the racial consciousness. In-

deed the same is true of the Koran, for much of its material was taken over by Mohammed from earlier Arab tradition. The Buddhist Tripitaka and the Christian New Testament are not to the same degree as the others national or racial Scriptures, but to offset this there is the fact that they take their start from the lives and teachings of great religious personalities and mirror something of the early stages of great religious movements.

We come, finally, to the third stage. For writings to be held sacred is one thing. For them to be held uniquely sacred and regarded as ultimate authorities is another thing. All of the great Scriptures have been and are so regarded, though some religious groups have been at more pains than others to fix the boundaries between Scripture and writings which are not Scripture.

When a collection of sacred books is definitely fenced in it is known as a "canon" of Scriptures. It would seem that the fencing in is usually undertaken, in the first instance, when a religious body finds itself in a position of danger, due to laxity or heresy within or oppressive forces without. The giving of greater fixity and definiteness to its Scriptures in such an emergency is a war measure, so to speak, designed to hold the faithful together so that they may present a united front against the enemy. The literary heritage is sifted, only those parts being approved as possessing divine author-

ity which may be interpreted as representing the tradition accepted by the dominant group, and which will therefore assist that group in its defensive and offensive task. Thus in the case of the Hebrew Scriptures the "Law" gained canonical rank in the critical period following the return of the Jews from Babylonian exile, when there was danger of loss of national identity through fusion with foreign elements. In the case of the New Testament the Gnostic menace of the second century, which came near resolving Christianity into a speculative esoteric philosophy, furnished the occasion for grappling with the question of which of the Christian writings were and which were not Scripture. In Buddhism, in like manner, canon forming was undertaken as a response to the danger of heresy.

Thus, begun, the canon-making process usually proceeded more or less on its own momentum for several centuries, other books and groups of books being added to the original collection. But in time it came definitely to an end. The view gained general acceptance that revelation belonged to the past and to the past only. To be sure, this view was challenged from time to time. Here and there arose individuals and groups who insisted that God still spoke, and spoke through them. Such a group were the Montanists of early Christian centuries. But these movements were pretty certain to exhibit excesses and vagaries which discredited them,

so that the net result was favorable to the canon idea. When what purported to be new revelation was compared with the old the verdict was, the old is better. And on the whole it was a sound verdict.

From time to time while the fixing of Scripture boundaries was under way the voices of outstanding leaders of course were heard, and pronouncements of councils went forth. But it was neither leaders nor councils which really had the deciding voice. The writings which became canonical were just those writings which had proved themselves to have sufficient vitality, and to be sufficiently harmonious with the trend of development up to that time, to enjoy continued prestige.

The assumed harmony, indeed, did not have to be very thoroughgoing. Actually, different points of view were always represented. Subjected to critical examination these Scriptures exhibit statements and reveal outlooks that are often contradictory and sometimes irreconcilable—a fact which has always been a cause of embarrassment to those who would put forth the canonical Scriptures as a homogeneous code for the regulation of life. Yet to call attention to their lack of homogeneity is not to disparage them but rather the opposite, since it shows that they are real, not artificial, marks them as mirrors of life.

The further question of whether they could be har-

monized with *later* developments naturally was not raised. It is nevertheless an important question. The great Scriptures are literally survivals. They survived because in some way and for some reason they proved their fitness to survive. Yet this might apply to their winning the rank of Scripture without necessarily establishing their right to hold that rank in perpetuity. They might have been fit to survive for a time without being fit, except for the assistance of the idea of canonicity, to survive and be held in sacred regard through subsequent centuries and millenniums.[2]

[2] On the subject of this chapter Professor Haydon remarks: "It would be interesting to know why the Japanese sacred books of the original Shinto did not follow this trend. Perhaps the story of them and their status (Nihongi, Kojiki, Norito) would make the regular development of sacredness and authority stand out more vividly."

CHAPTER V

THE RISE AND PERSISTENCE OF BIBLIOLATRY

BIBLIOLATRY has shown itself to be an almost invariable accompaniment of the canon idea. Indeed when the canon idea is highly developed and accepted with full literalness bibliolatry follows inevitably. The literal meaning of the word is *book worship.* Dorner defines it as "the excessive veneration of a book regarded as divinely inspired." [1]

> Its essential character consists in the belief that a group of sacred writings is the plenary depository of the Divine Spirit, and that, as such, it is of eternal duration and of superhuman origin; that it transcends all created things, or that, at all events, it possesses the quality of absolute infallibility, being, in fact, the perfect channel of Divine revelation.[2]

The important terms here are "excessive veneration," "plenary depository," "superhuman origin," "absolute infallibility," "perfect channel." When once a religious group has accustomed itself to the idea that a part of its classical literature belongs in a position of splendid

[1] A. Dorner, article "Bibliolatry," *ERE* II, 615.
[2] *Idem.*

isolation within a sacred enclosure, then veneration tends to become excessive and full-fledged bibliolatry is not far away.

As a rule the development of bibliolatry is slow. While a book is relatively new it may be widely read and highly praised but it is not likely to be regarded as infallible or of superhuman origin. And even when reverence does reach the point of being excessive it usually attaches itself first not so much to the book as to something which the book contains: to sayings of Zoroaster, of the Buddha, or of Jesus, for example. At this stage the Word of God, as contained in Scriptures, is still a living word. Its authority is that of the truth which it conveys and to which the heart of the reader or hearer responds; or at most the great personality back of the words is thought of as the source of the authority. There is freedom not only to give heed to what is written but to expand it, enlarge upon it; in fact it is often considered a duty so to do. The reader or hearer—which is to say one of the earlier adherents of a great religious movement—is very likely to feel that some of his contemporaries, perhaps he himself, experiences inspiration which is in a measure comparable with that of the revered writings.

But with the passing of time, and the loss of this sense of firsthand inspiration, the attitude toward Scrip-

ture changes. Practical considerations have much to do with the change. The need is felt for something definite and concrete to serve as a guide to life, a source of assurance to the perplexed, and above all a means of holding in line the obstreperous and so checking heresy. Leaders are no longer willing that the Scriptures should make their own impression and win their own obedience. Obedience is required and enforced, on the ground that here and here alone the voice of God is heard. There is no intentional deception in this. The leaders are self-deceived, while the rank and file are all too ready to follow in a path which seems to lead to definiteness, order, certainty. One of the most familiar phenomena in the history of religions is that of an image or symbol intended to represent a god coming to be thought of as itself the god. Bibliolatry belongs to the same class of phenomena.

Among the Brahmnists it came to be believed that the "sacred singers of the Vedic hymns did not compose these hymns, but actually saw them. The Veda itself is neither made nor created, but existed with the divinity before the creation."[8] In Zoroastrianism similar views about the Avesta were developed. In the Vispered it is written: "We sacrifice to the chapters

[8] C. P. Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion* (N.Y., Scribner, 1897-99), I, 131f.

of the later Yasna, and to its metrical lines, its words, and word structure." The Yasna itself says, "We worship all the words of Zarathustra." [4] It was believed that "the mere utterance of the sacred texts would produce marvelous effects."[5]

In Islam bibliolatry has been developed to the *n*th power. The Koran, moreover, furnishes an exception to the rule that the development is gradual. Here the bibliolatrous conception goes back to the very author himself. Mohammed had been greatly influenced by the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, though he seems to have known them only at second hand, and from these sources he got the idea that a book was the highest form of revelation. From them also he learned that prophets received revelations through angels, particularly, as he thought, through the angel Gabriel. Hence his account of his own revelations. They were from a book of which God himself was the author. The book was kept in heaven and parts were sent down from time to time to Mohammed through Gabriel. There are many passages in the Koran in which its divine origin is claimed or assumed, and the claim is maintained by Mohammedan apologists to this day. In a recent English edition it is declared:

[4] Vispered xxi (*SBE* XXXI, 362); Yasna lvii (*SBE* XXXI, 298). See Widgery, *op. cit.*, p. 51. *Cf.* also *SBE* XXXI, 295, 328, 355. Such language is frequent in the Yasna and the Vispered, but note how numerous the objects of "worship" are.

[5] M. Dhalla, quoted by Widgery, *op. cit.*, p. 51 note.

> We know that not only has no other scripture ever advanced the claim of being a perfect and final revelation of the divine will, as the Quran has done, but further, that every religious scripture revealed before the Holy Quran has undergone alterations in the course of time, and the Holy Quran is therefore the only book that can be a true guide for an ever advancing humanity.[6]

Extreme bibliolatry is met with also in Confucianism and Taoism, though here it perhaps comes nearer being a superstitious awe of books *per se* than of a "Bible."[7] In these Chinese religions the great problem is to keep in proper accord with the *Tao,* or order of the universe. Failure in this means disaster to the individual, and to domestic, social, and national life. And the classical writings—emanating from those earliest and holiest ancestors of the Chinese people who lived when this universal order was in the making and themselves had a hand in the making of it—are the one indispensable means of keeping in accord with the Tao. Hence nothing can be so important as the reverence and study of the classics, and nothing can be so nefarious and dangerous as teachings and actions not in harmony with them. This extreme reverence of their sacred writ-

[6] Woking, 1917, p. xcii; quoted by Widgery, *op. cit.,* p. 63.
[7] See J. J. M. De Groot, *The Religion of the Chinese* (N.Y., Macmillan, 1912), pp. 52f. He remarks upon the high position assigned to the almanac.

ings has played a prominent rôle in Chinese opposition to invading religions, especially Buddhism and Christianity. The foreign teachers have been regarded as on the one hand thoroughly contemptible in comparison with the native scholars with their thorough grounding in the classics, but on the other hand as a terrible menace in that they introduced forces antagonistic to the Tao.

To what extent all this has been changed by the revolutions of recent years it is difficult to say. Probably bibliolatry has been more seriously undermined in China than in the world of Islam, yet the outlook of many millions of both Mohammedans and Confucianists doubtless remains as it has been for centuries.

It need scarcely be said that the phenomenon is met with also in Judaism and Christianity. It is true that Mohammed excelled his models in the foundations which he laid for bibliolatry. Few if any of the writers of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures understood their inspiration in the naïve and materialistic way in which the Prophet of Islam understood his, nor did they apply the notion of divine revelation so directly to a *book*. Yet there is abundant evidence that bibliolatry did arise among Jews and Christians as it arose elsewhere, and that it is with us yet.

It is already near at hand in such an Old Testament passage as Nehemiah 8, where we have a vivid pic-

ture of a great open-air assembly of repatriated Jews giving heed from early morning to noon to the priest Ezra as he reads from "the book of the law of Moses which the Eternal had imposed upon Israel." [8] It is farther advanced in New Testament sayings such as that of Acts 1:16: "Brothers, the prediction of the Scriptures had to come true that the holy Spirit uttered by the lips of David . . ."; [9] or 2 Peter 1:20-21: "You must understand this in the first place, that no prophecy in Scripture can be understood through one's own powers, for no prophecy ever originated in the human will, but under the influence of the holy Spirit men spoke for God." [10] It is full-fledged in Tertullian, when he warns his women readers, "God bids you, Be veiled," [11] evidently having in mind Paul's insistence that women must keep their heads covered in church.

Orthodox Judaism still believes with Maimonides "that this Law will not be changed, and that no other Law will be revealed by the Creator, blessed be His Name." [12] And as to Christianity, Carpenter notes that

> it was possible for a scholar of unquestioned learning to declare in the pulpit of the University of Oxford barely half a century ago (1861) that "the

[8] Nehemiah 8:1; Moffatt's translation.
[9] Goodspeed's translation.
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] Tertullian, *On Female Dress*, 2:7; *cf.* I Cor. 11:2-16.
[12] Maimonides, quoted by Widgery, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

> Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the throne. Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it (where are we to stop?), every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High . . . faultless, unerring, supreme."[13]

The scholar referred to may have been Dean Burgon, though I have not verified this. At any rate the following, from a book of the dean's, is a fairly close parallel:

> The writer is but the instrument; God alone is responsible for every statement contained in the Scriptures. He is as much their author as Mr. John Morley is the author of the Life of Mr. Gladstone; and Mr. Morley is equally responsible for that book, whether he wrote it all himself, or whether he never wrote a line but simply dictated it to another. Inspiration means that God moves a man to write, infuses the ideas He wishes expressed, and chooses even suitable words, though not interfering with the style peculiar to each author.[14]

I forbear to cite quotations of more recent date, but those who have had wide experience as hearers of sermons and readers of current religious literature will probably not be unfamiliar with this language or the point of view which lies back of it.

[13] J. Estlin Carpenter, *op. cit.*, pp. 193f.
[14] Oxford, 1903; see Widgery, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

The related phenomenon of *bibliomancy* is also worthy of passing notice. The idea that a sacred book opened at random will give to the seeker a revelation suited to his present emergency has been widespread. It is prevalent among Mohammedans and Sikhs, and it has been widely characteristic of Protestant Christianity. John Wesley was addicted to it, as Augustine had been. It is referred to in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* as a practice of English "evangelicals." And if not this identical practice at any rate an equally superstitious regard for the Bible is still common among Christians.[15]

In concluding the subject I shall merely point out that this whole theory of Scriptures is subject to drastic criticism on a number of counts.

In the first place it has never really been workable. From their very nature it follows that ideas and practices of the most diverse sort may be based on Scriptures, so that where the notion of Scripture infallibility is adhered to consistently confusion and anarchy result. The history of Anabaptists, Mormons, etc., shows that this is more than a theoretical danger. The only safeguard against it is in backing up the supposedly infallible Scripture with an infallible interpreter, and this is what has usually been done. Catholic Christianity fell back upon the Church itself, claiming it to be the

[15] *Cf.* Widgery, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

custodian of an independent tradition reaching back through the bishops to the apostles, through the apostles to Christ, and through Christ to God. Protestantism, revolting from the Catholic claims, declared the Scriptures to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice. But when this position threatened to lead to chaos the Protestant leaders fell back on dogma as their actual basis of authority, though still holding to Scripture infallibility in theory. Either of these attempted solutions of the problem, whatever its merits, is a tacit confession that the theory of Biblical infallibility has proved unworkable.

In the second place it helps to foster and perpetuate the spirit of intolerance. The possessor of a complete, infallible, and final revelation of the eternal scheme of things is failing in a sacred duty if he neglects any means of sharing its benefits with others. From his point of view tolerance is not a virtue but a weakness and an infidelity. It is not an accident that Islam, the most addicted to bibliolatry of all religions, has also been most committed to the principle of propagation by the sword; or that the ancient Greeks and Romans, who were not "peoples of a Book," practiced large religious tolerance. In America to-day religious intolerance and bibliolatry go hand in hand.

In the third place it has been and is a serious handicap to effective religious and moral education. In Protestant

Christianity the view has largely prevailed until recently that teaching the contents of the Bible and facts about the Bible was in itself religious education. From the point of view of bibliolatry this is so true as to be almost a truism, but the fact remains that it involves a confusion of means with end and its effects have been unfortunate. The modern religious education movement is with difficulty overcoming this handicap and establishing itself on sound educational principles, the Bible being used as a religious source book of great value but not as an infallible guidebook to life.

Again, it stands in the way of first-hand religious experience and hence of spiritual and moral growth. Dorner remarks that the "less capable people are of personally experiencing the truths" won in the past, "the more eager are they to find guarantees thereof."[16] This is natural and human and need not be condemned, but it is scarcely the part of enlightened leadership to encourage the continuance of such an attitude. It belongs to a stage of intellectual and spiritual childhood which it should be our aim to outgrow.

Finally, the charge must be made against bibliolatry that it is fundamentally *false*. However great the value of Scriptures, however really they may be inspired, however truly they may be mouthpieces of revelation, the fact remains that they are not of superhuman

[16] Dorner, *op. cit.*, II, 615.

origin, they have no absolute infallibility, they are not perfect channels of divine revelation, or plenary depositories of the divine spirit. None of these things is true of them. The whole conception with which we have been dealing is untenable, outworn, and ought to be cast aside.

Why has it developed so widely and persisted so tenaciously? Probably the underlying reason has been the deep-rooted desire for concrete authority, with the individual peace and social unity which seem to require such authority for their maintenance. Whether we admit it or not it is a great comfort to nearly all of us to be *told* what is what and what we ought to do.

CHAPTER VI

SCRIPTURES AND CLERGY

All religions which have Scriptures have also an order corresponding more or less with what we call the clergy, or priesthood, and a close relation is always to be observed between Scriptures and clergy.

We may note to start with that the claim of inspiration is not usually made by or for priests. It has rather been their prophets, mystics, saints—sometimes their philosophers—whom religious groups have regarded as the mouthpieces of divine revelation. But what has been revealed through these great but usually individualistic and detached figures it has been the function of the priesthood or clergy to preserve, expound, enlarge upon, and systematize. The enormous labor of systematizing the Hindu Scriptures has certainly been performed by the Brahmans or priestly caste. In the compiling of most of the extant parts of the Avesta the hand of the priest may be seen with equal clearness. In the Jewish Scriptures, again, the influence of the priestly outlook is obvious to every reader. All this has followed naturally from the fact that the priesthood is likely to be the one definitely organized and continuously functioning body of professional religionists

within the group. Among the Jews after Ezra's time there came into being a body of Biblical scholars, called scribes, who were distinct from the priesthood, but this was unusual.

Now the body of clergy within a religion has always tended, from the very nature of its position and functions, to develop two characteristics: concern with the more formal side of religion, especially ritual, and a high degree of self-consciousness. Hence the very great service which the clergy has performed as custodian of Scriptures has been not a little offset by other and less fortunate aspects of the relationship.

For one thing, the close relation of Scriptures to the priesthood has carried with it the danger of one-sidedness. From the point of view of general usefulness it must be reckoned as one of the serious limitations of nearly all the great Scriptures that so much of their content is taken up with matters of ritual or of detailed rule—in other words with matter that concerns one professional class rather than the adherents of the religion in general. It is largely this fact which makes the sacred writings seem a dreary waste to many who try to read them. Max Müller has the following paragraph at the close of his discussion of the probable reasons for the inclusion in the *Sacred Books of the East* of so much matter that does not seem to qualify as "sacred":

> Lastly, we must remember that those who handed down the ancestral treasures of ancient wisdom, would often feel inclined to add what seemed useful to themselves, and what they knew could be preserved in one way only, namely, if it was allowed to form part of the tradition that had to be handed down, as a sacred trust, from generation to generation. The priestly influence was at work, even before there were priests by profession, and when the priesthood had once become professional, its influence may account for much that would otherwise seem inexplicable in the sacred codes of the ancient world.[1]

The Hebrew Bible suffers from this limitation less than some of the others. Prophets set up a healthy competition with priests, and in the later books the scribal point of view makes itself strongly felt. The ethical mysticism of the Psalms also does much to affect the general tone. Yet whole books of the Old Testament, including some of the longest books, give evidence of this professional one-sidedness. The New Testament, on the other hand, came into being in a short and early period of Christian development, before the priesthood had come into power. Hence this Scripture is largely free from clerical self-consciousness. A suggestion of it may be seen in the pastoral exhortations of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, and the priestly interpre-

[1] *SBE* I, xv.

tation of the significance of Christ in Hebrews is worthy of note. But it is not extreme and does not dominate. As to the Koran, Mohammed was not a priest, yet his book displays much of the priestly interest, especially in the later surahs.

This one-sidedness of Scriptures, caused by priestly dominance, has been doubly unfortunate because the side thus made prominent was the less important side. That ritual has great religious value and that rules may have great moral value need not be denied, yet where ritual and rules are given chief prominence an evil results which is not merely the evil of one-sidedness. It is a threat to the very spirit and life of the religion which the Scriptures reveal.

Nor is this all. A third effect of the paternal relation of the priesthood to Scriptures has been that the Scriptures have thus been made a conservative and institutionalist—not to say reactionary—force. In all the great Scriptures the non-conforming, experimental, venturing outlook is present. Some of them—notably the Avesta, the Tripitaka, the New Testament and the Koran—owe their very existence to the breaking out of revolutionary movements within old religions. But once they have come under the guardianship of the clergy this fact is readily covered up and forgotten. An established order of religious leaders, whatever it may be called, is pretty certain to be committed to the main-

tenance of safeguards rather than to the encouragement of venture. Perhaps this is as it should be, but one of the effects has been to smother the individual and independent prophetic note in Scriptures in the interest of conformity. The smothering takes place partly in the compiling process prior to full canonization and partly in the interpretation and use of the Scriptures after they have become fully canonical.

Attempts to release Scriptures from priestly thralldom have been frequent in religious history, particularly in the history of Christianity. Jesus himself gave a strong initial impulse in this direction. Spiritual insight led him to see the error and the loss involved in the monopoly of Scripture interpretation by a professional class —the scribes—notwithstanding the fact that many individuals in this class were able and sincere. Jacob Spener in Germany and William Tyndale in England are outstanding names among those who have followed the Founder's leadership in this. The School of Antioch in early Christian history and the Tübingen School in the nineteenth century will serve as examples of a more intellectual type of revolt—the former against the allegorical fancy, and the latter against the unscientific and barren dogmatism which characterized the clerical handling of the Scriptures in the respective periods.

It is encouraging to note how often these revolts have come from within the ranks of the clergy itself. The

leaders of the School of Antioch were priests of the church. Wyclif, Luther, and Tyndale also belonged to the clergy, as did the pietist Spener and the Tübingen scholars Baur and Strauss. In our own time a free and non-clerical use of the Bible has been powerfully forwarded by scholars of the type of Professors Harnack and Peake and by preachers such as Drs. Hutton and Fosdick, all of them members of the Christian clergy.

Yet Zarathustra was not a Magus, Gautama was not a Brahman, and Jesus was neither priest nor scribe. All were laymen. The voices raised in the Upanishads against the excessive preoccupation with sacrifice are probably the voices of laymen. Outside as well as inside forces have played their part and have still a part to play in saving religion and Scriptures from the dangers which go with clerical control. To-day the outside forces are stronger than ever before, though in this field they have as yet exercised but little of their strength. It is surprising how generally our educated public is still content to see the Bible through clerical spectacles, even when to do so involves denial of a world view which they think they have accepted. But a change is under way, and before long the clergy may find its monopolistic control of the Scriptures challenged from outside in a way that will be for the good of all concerned.

The fact that several of the book religions do not

have a priesthood in the stricter sense is less important for our present discussion than might be supposed. Buddhism, Islam, and Protestant Christianity are opposed in theory to all sacerdotal claims, yet in Buddhism the monks occupy a position similar to that of priests, while in Islam the powerful order of the Ulema, comparable to the scribes in Judaism, perpetuates the formal and deadening use of Koran and Sunna. To the situation in Protestant Christianity we may give a little more extended notice.

The tradition of the clerical office in Protestantism lays emphasis on the prophetic more than the priestly function: its ministers are expected to be voices as well as echoes. Yet they have by no means escaped the general danger. In many Protestant churches it is easy for an outsider to get the impression that the minister is using the Bible mainly as a support to the traditional beliefs and practices of the order to which he belongs; that its main function in his hands is to keep the ecclesiastical wheels going round, and so, incidentally, assure the payment of his salary. Such a view is unsympathetic, and in so far as it imputes intentional dishonesty or conscious insincerity it is in almost all cases unjust, yet is not without apparent grounds.

It may be added that the handling of the Bible by Protestant ministers of the more liberal persuasion shows signs of considerable confusion at present, due

to their recent throwing off of bibliolatry. They see, with greater or less clearness, that the idea of infallibility is untenable, but they do not see any equally clear-cut conception at hand to take its place. They are called upon to bring messages from the Bible to bear upon every conceivable interest, activity, and emergency of mankind, even as their predecessors were, but they are unable to give to the "Thus sayeth the Lord" the convincing finality which the fathers gave to it. No doubt this confusion will be cleared up as the discovery is increasingly made that strength and comfort and guidance are to be drawn from the Bible not by reason of any supernatural infallibility which it possesses but because of the vital religious experience which it records.

Meanwhile, with regard to the whole subject treated in this chapter, we do well to remember that even a very unenlightened clergy may be effective in bringing some part of the religion of the Scriptures into close contact with life through its rites and detailed precepts. We may think that such contact is far too mechanical to be ideal, but perhaps it is better suited to the needs of the masses than we realize.

CHAPTER VII

SCRIPTURES AND TRADITION

A VERY frequent phenomenon, in the book religions, has been the development of a mass of material of later date than the Scriptures—transmitted first in oral and then in written form—into a "Tradition," which in time came to have a prestige nearly if not quite equal to that of the Scriptures themselves.

Thus while the Vedas and allied writings make up the Shruti (revelation) of Brahmanism they do not by any means include all of its sacred literature: there is also the Smriti (tradition), an extensive collection of later material. Judaism has not only its recognized canon of Law, Prophets, and Writings, but also a great body of Tradition which was still oral in the time of Jesus but later was given written form in the Mishna. Still later came the Gemara, and Mishna plus Gemara yielded the Talmud. Islam, in addition to the Koran, has collections of traditional material known as the Sunna, or Hadith.

In Catholic Christianity, also, the idea of Tradition is present and potent, though it is not quite as definitely applied to a body of literature. Here tradition includes

the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and other doctrinal statements, and the writings of orthodox fathers, but it has other embodiments as well: the liturgy and ritual (especially the mass) etc. Thus the voice of Tradition becomes almost equivalent to the voice of the historic church.

In general it may be said that the contents of Tradition, like the contents of Scripture, is highly miscellaneous. It resembles more particularly the later part of the Scriptures. Tradition, perhaps even more than Scripture, shows the influence of the priestly or other professional class.

The tendency to elevate Tradition to practically the rank of Scripture has usually met resistance, for example, on the part of Sadducees in Judaism, Shi'ites in Islam, and Protestants in Christianity; but in each case the Tradition has been able to maintain itself in the esteem of the majority. It owes this success largely to the fact that it has provided a way of obtaining relief from the embarrassments of a rigid doctrine of Scripture without formally abandoning the doctrine. Even in the relatively uncreative periods in which these bodies of Tradition have had their origin religious groups have felt the inadequacy of their Scriptures to do what they were supposed to do, and have felt also that the group itself had the right and duty to try to supply the deficiency. Had there not been such feeling, how-

ever subconscious, the Tradition would never have arisen and gained the prestige which it did gain.

In theory Scripture and Tradition are always in closest harmony. The two are different mouthpieces of the same voice, Tradition supplementing the revelation which Scripture gives. Typical expression is given to this theory in an interpretation of Exodus 24:12 which we have from Rabbi Simeon Lakish, who lived in the third century A.D. "I will give thee the tablets of stone, and the Law and the Commandments. . . ." says Jehovah to Moses. According to Rabbi Simeon the tablets of stone are the Decalogue, the Law is the Scripture, and the Commandment is the Mishna; hence not only the Decalogue and the Scripture but the Mishna as well was given to Moses from Sinai.[1] The Mohammedan theory is similar. God has given his final revelation in twofold form, through a book dictated to the Prophet and through what could be learned from the Prophet's actions in the different circumstances of his life. From the former comes the Koran, from the latter the Hadith. As to Catholic Christian theory, Cardinal Newman writes in one passage, "The Bible is the record of the whole revealed faith";[2] and elsewhere, "Had Scripture never been written, Tradi-

[1] See *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1910-11), xxvi, 381. (Hereafter referred to as *EB;* 11th ed. unless otherwise specified).

[2] Quoted in Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma* (London, Smith, 1876), p. 259.

tion would have existed still; it has an intrinsic, substantive authority, and a use collateral to Scripture." [3]

Investigation, however, does not altogether bear out this theory. We have seen that none of the great Scriptures is wholly harmonious within itself, hence it is no surprise to find that the assumed agreement between Scripture and Tradition is often imaginative. Moreover there is sometimes room for question as to the value of the supplementary matter which Tradition offers.

A striking illustration of this may be seen in the belief that the Twelve Apostles of Jesus laid the foundations of Christianity. This belief made its way into Christian Tradition in the second century and became so strongly intrenched there that to the majority of Christians it is almost an axiom to this day. That it has substantial basis in the New Testament records is seldom questioned, either by Catholics or Protestants. But when it is questioned, and investigated, its validity dwindles almost to the vanishing point. The fact is that we know little about the Twelve. Peter is the only one of the group whose personality stands out with even moderate distinctness. According to the Tradition these men founded the episcopate, spoke through the New Testament Scriptures, and laid the foundations of

[3] Quoted in Funk & Wagnalls, *Standard Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v.

Christian dogma—in short handed down the church to humanity. But historical verification of this view is utterly lacking. Peter and John may have played rôles of some prominence in the spread of Christianity from Palestine, though if so there is not much evidence of the fact in the New Testament or elsewhere. The other ten are shadowy figures, who probably had little or nothing to do with the launching of the movement. What the New Testament tells us about the beginnings of Christianity is far from complete or self-interpreting, but it must be added that what Tradition contributes at this point serves to distort rather than to clarify the picture.

This is perhaps an extreme illustration. Nevertheless it is certain that the claim for Tradition that it supplements Scripture while being in full agreement with it cannot be taken at face value. Agreement along broad lines is to be expected and is found, and Tradition as well as Scripture has matter of real and permanent value; but there is no such thing as preestablished harmony, and where there is valuable supplementary matter in the Tradition it is likely to be in the realm of practical guidance rather than of accurate history or spiritual profundity.

The making of creeds and confessions has been a particularly interesting aspect of the history of Tradition. In this field Christianity has far outstripped all other

religions. Hinduism and Judaism have shown very little disposition to develop their Tradition in this direction. Among Buddhists, Zoroastrians, and Mohammedans only short and simple forms of creed are really binding. Indeed "we look almost in vain for any documents in ethnic religion, ancient or modern, which correspond to the Christian Creeds and Confessions." [4] Tradition in the form of a creed has the advantage of being uniform, compact, systematic; but even so it must be judged inferior in worth to the Scriptures, which are richer and more varied in their contents, less one-sidedly intellectual, more capable of perennial appeal, more alive.

In the case of the creeds, as with Tradition in general, the relation to Scripture is not always what it is assumed to be. The so-called Apostles' Creed (which took form centuries after the time of the Apostles) passes directly from "born of the Virgin Mary" to "suffered under Pontius Pilate," and the Nicene Creed in like manner is entirely silent as to the earthly life of Jesus; yet these formulas are generally understood by those who use them to be epitomes of Scripture teaching. Such at any rate is the Protestant understanding. The New Testament, as well as the creeds, has much to say about the divine Christ, but the silence of these creeds about the

[4] W. A. Curtis, *A History of Creeds and Confessions of Faith* (Edinburgh, Clark, 1911), p. 11.

earthly Jesus is not in harmony with the New Testament.

In this connection it is pertinent to note that denial of the authority of Tradition is one of the theoretical distinguishing marks of Protestant as over against Catholic Christianity, but that actually the denial is far from thoroughgoing. The early creeds are to all intents and purposes as authoritative with Protestants as Catholics, particularly those parts of the creeds which have to do with the nature of Christ. Moreover the Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed churches which grew out of the Reformation movement proceeded to make creeds, confessions, and catechisms of their own, and thus developed a new body of Tradition which they held as highly authoritative. The effect has been to place these Protestant groups in a position with respect to Tradition which is hardly as defensible even as that of the Catholic church. If Tradition must be held authoritative there would seem to be an advantage in having it broadly defined—nearly equivalent to the voice of the church itself—rather than having it identified with creedal formulas produced by limited groups in controversial periods.

Later Protestant bodies, however—notably the Baptists and the Methodists—have departed from this tendency to base authority on creeds. It is in these bodies that the Protestant principle of going back of Tradition

to Scripture has found its most consistent expression, and the remarkable progress which they have made, in numbers, in aggressive zeal, and in prestige, is one of the noteworthy signs of the times.

Tradition in general and the creeds in particular could be sacrificed with far less loss to humanity than could the Scriptures, but bibliolatry is equally indefensible when applied to either. Tradition has its greatest significance in the fact that it is really a negation of the idea of strict canonicity. But in the past the trouble has been that the Tradition itself—or a part of the Tradition in the form of a creed—has by and by become practically canonized, the religion thus denying once more that it possessed or needed a continuous living voice. This may at one time have been excusable but it is so no longer. Enlightened religion must increasingly put away the fiction that a particular ancient book, set of books, or dogmatic formula supposedly derived therefrom, is the plenary depository of the divine Spirit. It has never been consistently adhered to in fact: it should be abandoned in theory.

CHAPTER VIII

SCRIPTURES AND THE INNER LIGHT

THESE two terms may be said to connote opposite theories of revelation, but it is possible to make too much of the opposition. It is true that he whose religion has its main basis in authoritative Scriptures thinks of the voice of God as coming to him mainly from outside and above himself, and this view is in obvious contrast with that of him who finds God chiefly through the voice within. Yet it is to be noted that many of the most cherished parts of Scriptures are themselves products and records of the inner light and have an immediate and powerful appeal to those who are conscious of like experiences. Hence it is not surprising to find that the great mystics have frequently been at the same time lavish users of Scripture materials and dissenters from current attitudes toward Scripture. They above all others have seen and borne witness against the evils of the "plenary deposit" idea. They have been anti-biblicists not in the sense of rejecting Scriptures but in that their voices have often been raised against the tendency to make the written word a substitute for the living word.

"Bible reading, sometimes considered peculiarly characteristic of English piety, is historically the child of mysticism." So Evelyn Underhill maintains. Richard Rolle and Walter Hilton, English mystical writers of the fourteenth century, "are saturated in the language and imagery of the Bible, and a close knowledge of Scripture is needed if we are to understand all their words imply." Rolle had translated the Psalms into English in advance of Wyclif. He exhorts his disciples that they "be not negligent in meditating and reading holy Scripture, and most in those places where it teaches manners and to eschew deceits of the fiend and speaks of God's love and contemplative living." [1] The exhortation is typical both in its high valuation of Scripture and in what it reveals as to the matter in Scripture that was especially valued. It represents an attitude which has been widespread among those who have had the mystical outlook. We meet with it both before and after the Reformation, both in Great Britain and on the Continent. It finds expression among Waldensians, Brethren of the Common Life, Anabaptists, Quakers, and allied groups, in Christianity and in other religions.

Yet while mystics of many types have vied with one another in stressing the importance of the Scriptures and making large use of their materials, they have been

[1] Quotations from Evelyn Underhill, *The Mystics of the Church* (London, Clark), p. 114.

almost equally outspoken in criticism of views of Scripture which were standard among their contemporaries. A few quotations will serve to illustrate their attitude:

> Not by reason can Atman be laid hold of,
> Not by intellect and much knowedge of Scripture;
> Only they whom he elects can comprehend him,
> To them Atman reveals himself.[2]

These lines give expression to the mystical feeling about Scripture in Brahamanism. Persian Sufiism, again, furnishes interesting examples. The Sufi movement developed as a reaction from the formalizing tendencies of Islam much as similar ascetic and mystical strains appeared in early Christianity. The Sufi poets of Persia were saturated with the Koran. Some of them knew it by heart. Yet they were true mystics in their scornful attitude toward fasts, formal prayers, and the much repetition of Koranic texts.[3]

The following is a paragraph from the *Book of the Two Men,* one of many treatises produced by the "Friends of God" in Germany in the fourteenth century:

> If two men gave thee a description of the city of Rome, one by mere hearsay, and the other by experience after he had been there, thou wouldst give thy attention mainly to the second. So also,

[2] Quoted in E. Lehmann, *Mysticism in Heathendom and Christendom* (London, Luzac, 1910), p. 50.
[3] See *ibid.,* pp. 64f.

> if a man who has been touched inwardly by divine grace hears the preaching of a doctor who still loves himself, he feels that the preaching of such a doctor does not come from pure and unadulterated love of God. The soul that is filled with divine love is not touched by such a sermon. Such a preacher is speaking only by hearsay of the heavenly Rome, and of the roads which lead to it. He knows only what he has learned from Scripture. But if the same man hears the preaching of a master who knows both from Scripture and through his own spiritual experience, a master who has renounced all self-love and self-advantage, who knows the heavenly Rome, not only by hearsay, but because he has travelled the road to it, and because he has seen the form of its buildings, he rejoices to hear his message, because it proceeds from the Divine Love itself.[4]

Another literary product of the Friends of God is the mystical apocalypse called the *Book of the Nine Rocks.* The author was commanded to write down the visions which he had seen but resisted the command, saying: "Are there not books enough by great doctors, who can write much better than I can?" and protesting

[4] Quoted in Rufus M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion* (N.Y., Macmillan, 1919), p. 259. The book is published by Schmidt in *Nikolaus von Basel,* and by Lauchert, *Des Gottesfreundes in Oberland, Buch von den Zwei Mannen* (Bonn, 1896). See Jones, *op. cit.,* p. 246.

that his book "will carry no conviction, because it is not proved by the Scriptures." The Divine Voice answered:

> Without doubt the Scriptures came from the Holy Spirit, but why cannot God still write such a book? . . . Is not the power of God the same as in Scripture times? Whoever does not believe that God can work His wonderful works through His "Friends" today, as He did in the times of the Old and New Testament, that man is not a Christian, for he does not believe that the divine power remains the same throughout the centuries.[5]

Hans Denck, mystical apostle of Anabaptism in the early sixteenth century, had much to say on this subject. He declared that the Bible "is the light and guide on the way of Faith, and without it the best of us would stumble and go astray, but it is not the primary Word of God." He wrote further:

> The Holy Scriptures I esteem above human treasures, but not so highly as the Word of God, which is living, powerful, and eternal, and pure from the elements of this world, since it is God Himself, Spirit and not letter, written without pen and paper, so that it can never be blotted out.

[5] Quoted in Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 267f. The book is published by Schmidt, *Das Buch von den Neun Felsen* (Leipzig, 1859). See Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

> Therefore, blessedness is not bound up in Scripture, however useful and good it may always be in that direction. It is not possible for Scripture to make better a bad heart; but a good heart is bettered by all things. A man who is chosen by God may attain to blessedness without preaching, without Scripture.[6]

From Sebastian Franck, a contemporary of Hans Denck and also of Martin Luther, we have the following:

> We ought . . . to pay attention to the witness of our hearts, and never to think or act against our conscience. For everything does not hang upon the bare letter of Scripture; everything hangs, rather, on the spirit of Scripture and on a spiritual understanding of the inner meaning of what God has said. If we weigh every matter carefully we shall find its true meaning in the depth of our spiritual understanding and by the mind of Christ. Otherwise, the dead letter of Scripture would make us all heretics and fools, for everything can be bedecked and defended with texts, therefore let nobody confound himself and confuse himself with Scripture, but let everyone weigh and test Scripture to see how it fits his own heart. If it is against his conscience and the Word within his own soul, then be sure he has not reached the right meaning,

[6] Quoted in Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 384-386.

> according to the mind of the Spirit, for the Scriptures must give witness *to* the Spirit, never against it.[7]

Casper Schwenckfeld, Silesian nobleman of noble character, writing in the same period gives expression to the same outlook.[8] And a century later we again hear the note from Silesia, this time from one of the most influential of all the mystics, the shoemaker Jacob Boehme of Görlitz. Near the end of his life Boehme wrote:

> If I had no other books except the book which I myself am, I should have books enough. The entire Bible lies in me if I have Christ's Spirit in me. What do I need of more books? Shall I quarrel over what is outside me before I have learned what is within me?[9]

From the middle of the seventeenth century on the mysticism of Boehme attracted much attention in England, where his followers finally became merged with the Quakers. John Sparrow, one of the English Behmenists, writes:

> The ground of all that was in Adam is in us; for whatever ground lay in God, the same lieth in

[7] Quoted in Rufus M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (N.Y., Macmillan, 1914), p. 50, from Franck's *Chronica, Zeitbuch und Geschichtsbibel* (Strasbourg, 1531), p. 452 b.

[8] See Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*, pp. 73f.

[9] Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 170.

> Christ and through Him it lieth in us, for He is in us all. And he that knoweth God in himself . . . may well be able to speak the word of God infallibly as the holy men that penned the Scriptures.[10]

Elsewhere Sparrow seems to avoid the suggestion that present-day men may speak "infallibily," yet the quotation above illustrates one of the shortcomings of the mystical view of the Scriptures as we meet with it throughout the Middle Ages and well on into the modern period. It is not as "modern" as it may at first appear. Often enlightened comments such as those we have quoted go hand in hand with a use of Scripture which is highly fanciful. Probably no man living in the sixteenth century came nearer to having the modern mind and spirit than did Sebastian Franck, yet the last sentence quoted from him above is not a sound principle of exegesis, however admirable it may be in its practical bearing. And with the less well balanced mystics the tendency is not to abandon the idea of Scripture infallibility but rather to extend the scope of the idea so as to include themselves. An extreme example is seen in the "Ranters" of the seventeenth century, who made themselves a nuisance both in England and in the American colonies.

[10] Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 215, from Introduction to *The Three Principles* (1648).

> The Ranters . . . said "they had no occasion to read the Scriptures or hear sermons, because Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were all in them." They would not call anything the Word of God unless it was revealed in them as well as in the Scriptures. They believed a truth not because "such and such writ it," but because "God sayeth so in me." They admitted that Paul had the Spirit, when he wrote, but they said: "Have not *I* the Spirit, and why may not I write Scriptures as well as Paul, and what I write be as binding and infallible as that which Paul writ?" [11]

But it is to be noted that these men were strenuously opposed not only by Anglicans and Presbyterians but also by George Fox and other Quaker leaders.

We have passed by Luther and Calvin, since they were not typical mystics, but it will be worth while now to return to them for a moment. That Luther had much of the mystical in his make-up is obvious. Calvin had it too, though this is less clear on the surface. But both combined with their mysticism a concern for the practical and an administrative genius. Hence it is of particular interest to observe in them the impact of the two ideas of revelation which we are considering.

At the beginning of his reforming career Luther's attitude toward Scripture was nearly the typical mystical

[11] Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 474.

attitude. "God must say to thee in thine own heart, This is God's word," he declared. And his practice was true to this principle, for he exalted those parts of the Bible (such as John's Gospel, Paul's epistles, and the Psalms) which seemed to him to reflect his own experience of saving faith in Christ, spoke disparagingly of parts (such as the Epistle of James and the book of Revelation) to which his own soul did not respond, and in general handled Scripture with a freedom that was quite unusual in his time. But it soon developed that Luther was far too much of an authoritarian, felt too keenly the value of order and conformity, to allow to others the freedom which he had allowed himself. The practical instinct in him came forward as a check to the mystical.

Calvin did not follow Luther in distinguishing different levels of value in the Bible, nor did he go with the mystics (and with Zwingli) in recognizing a "Bible in the heart." He did insist, however, that the one sure proof of the truth of the Bible's message was to be had from the witness of the divine Spirit in the believer's heart. He gave classical expression to this idea, and it became one of the fundamentals of Protestant doctrine. It was a sincere attempt to bind together Scripture and the inner light as the two great sources of truth and authority. It was perhaps as successful as such an effort could be, but that is not to say that it

really succeeded. If the inner light must submit to be "bound" it at once loses the spontaneity, the independence, the vitality, the self-verifying cogency, in which its whole worth consists. For be it observed that there was no room for question as to what the divine voice within would say: it would give its imprimatur to all that the Bible contained. Said Calvin (reversing the dictum of Franck): "Those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit acquiesce implicitly in Scripture." [12]

As between Scripture and the inner light, then, it was distinctly Scripture which had the preeminence in the standard Protestantism that emerged from the struggles of the early sixteenth century. But in truth what emerged triumphant was neither of the two: it was *dogma,* expressed in the catechisms, creeds, and confessions which were supposed to epitomize the Scriptures, but did so very imperfectly.

And on the surface the situation in Protestantism would seem not to have changed greatly in the past four centuries. Scripture is still supreme in theory and dogma in fact, while the inner light maintains itself in peace so long as it does not clash with constituted authority. Mystical groups such as the Quakers have continued to bear their witness, but they are a very small minority.

Beneath the surface, however, there has been change

[12] *Institutes* I, vii, 5.

—progress. Gradually we are getting less afraid of freedom, and that means that we are approaching the time when Scripture and the inner light will be left each to do its own work, exert its own influence, make its own contribution to the guidance of life and the achievement of the Kingdom of God. We have gone far enough already to see that in the atmosphere of freedom the problem of harmonizing the two will solve itself. They are natural allies. In some way the witness of the spirit within the individual must be checked up by reference to the witness of the spirit in the larger life of humanity, and perhaps the best of all aids to such checking up is to be found in the Scriptures, with their varied records of past religious experience. But if we would make this use of Scriptures we may not allow dogma to tell us what they say and mean: they must be read and understood in the light of the best scholarship and deepest spiritual insight of each succeeding age.

CHAPTER IX

SCRIPTURES AND CULTURE

THE relation between Scriptures and culture is a subject which has a variety of aspects. Scriptures have been products of culture, aids to the advance of culture, a means of acquiring culture. It must be added that they have too often, through no fault of their own, been obstacles in the way of the progress of culture. I am using the term in the broad sense, as equivalent to human *enlightenment.*

In a very large degree the great Bibles of mankind are the products and depositories of the best culture of the races and periods which produced them. We have seen that the history of Scriptures has been closely bound up with the history of priesthoods, and it is well known that in past ages culture has been largely a monopoly of priests. Even where the Scriptures have had their origin in a revolt from the dominant religion and culture—as in the case of the Tripitaka and the New Testament—the matter has not been essentially different. The new movement did not destroy the old culture but rather gave new life to it. The Scriptures thus became depositories of culture in a twofold sense,

conserving and transmitting much of the value of the old along with the fresh inspiration and discovery of the new. Mohammed, again, was scarcely what would be called a cultured man, yet he was a man of genius, and through accident, design, or providence he bequeathed to his people a book which was a remarkable compendium of old and new cultural values.

And these Scriptures, once established, became aids to the advancement of culture far beyond what has generally been realized. The fact that they were thought to be supernatural and infallible naturally made them objects of the most painstaking study. "The necessity of explaining their use of words and grammatical constructions, their historical and geographical statements and views, their pictures and theories of social life, their psychology and philosophy, their theistic and eschatological ideas, have led to investigations of all these subjects." [1] In Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity philosophical and scientific studies have been enormously stimulated by the challenge of the inherited cultural materials which the respective Scriptures contain.

No doubt, the situation in Western Christendom in our own time has changed somewhat. Depositories of inherited wisdom, including the Scriptures, have had

[1] C. H. Toy, *op. cit.*, pp. 561f.

to give place to the new materials gathered at first hand and exhaustively classified by experimental science. But this is not to say that contributions of Scripture to the advancement of culture belong wholly to the past. For a long time to come the treasures of Psalms and Gospels are likely to be needed as reminders that culture to be worthy of the name must be broadly defined—must be humble and reverent in its attitude toward the intangibles, the imponderables, of life. And it may be remarked incidentally that the contrast between the prescientific views of the world and of man which find expression in the Scriptures and the scientific view is contributing to popular education in our time in a very important way. To many men and women the "monkey" trial at Dayton, Tennessee, was more of a stimulus to grappling with big ideas than all of their formal education had been.

It is conceivable that any one of the great Scriptures might in itself prove a sufficient basis of culture for an individual, that is, that a high type of character and personality might be built upon the sole foundation of its materials. The influence of the Bible in the molding of the life of Abraham Lincoln is highly significant. Yet there are several reasons why the "man of one book" is not likely to be a well-rounded or really cultured man.

For one thing, the great Bibles are all *old.* That is

an advantage but it is also a limitation. "God is not dumb that he should speak no more," as Lowell has said and as the mystics all along have seen. To decline to include in one's cultural outlook what is post-biblical, or what cannot clearly be harmonized with Biblical theology or a Biblical world view, is to tie oneself to the past in a way for which there is no true warrant and the results of which can scarcely be other than unfortunate.

Moreover we have seen that the great Bibles, with all their variety and richness, are not wholly or fully representative even of the past to which they belong. They tend to be one-sided, especially by reason of their priestly affiliations. The Jewish-Christian Scriptures escape this limitation in unusual degree, yet the often repeated claim that all that is good in our modern civilization comes to us from the Bible goes too far. It overlooks, above all, one very important extra-biblical strain: the Greek culture which entered Christianity in some degree in the early centuries and more fully with the Renaissance—scarcely at all through the New Testament. The interest in nature, the belief that "the proper study of mankind is man," and the spirit of tolerance—these may be cited as three important aspects of the outlook of modern Christendom which to all appearances are much more a Hellenic than a Biblical heritage.

And beyond all this is the simple fact that the culture of the Bible cannot be acquired except as a culture from outside the Bible is brought to the study of it. The barrier of unfamiliar languages, of complex arrangement of materials, of obsolete literary forms, and of an alien thought world is all but insurmountable. Nor is this all. Thanks to church and Sunday-school teaching, well meant but often misdirected, most Christians have in their youth imbibed post-biblical ideas about the Bible, which may or may not be good ideas in themselves, but which in any case prevent the Bible from making its own contribution either to religion or to culture. If these barriers are to be removed their existence must first be realized. It is here that the outside culture comes into play. A vast deal of earnest and painstaking study of the Bible has failed to yield good fruit owing to lack of the balance, the sanity, and the humility which such culture would have given.

Happily there are men and women who have the necessary culture as a native endowment, or at any rate have its fruits of balance, sanity, and humility. Such a one was Lincoln. This has all along been a saving factor in the situation. And recent developments in church programs of religious education offer ground for encouragement. Increasingly it is seen that to assume that Bible study is itself religious education, and

that inherited views of the Bible necessarily give the true key to its meaning, is a hopelessly wrong approach. Education, religious and secular alike, must pursue its own way, with the best scientific method which it knows, leaving Bible study to follow the same course. This will not lead to a divorce of the two but to their more effective coordination. The Bible will make such contribution to education as it is able to make, and there is an excellent chance that in the future it will win back its place as a foremost source and stimulus of culture.

Bible study not balanced by something of general culture is very likely to yield bad fruit, but the particular kind of bad fruit it yields depends on the individual or group concerned. In the case of those who are on other grounds disposed to be critical of religion the effect has often been to arouse scornful antagonism. Matthew Arnold long ago noted that "many of the most successful, energetic and ingenious of the artisan class, who are steady and rise, are now found either of themselves rejecting the Bible altogether or following teachers who tell them the Bible is an exploded superstition. . . . Owing to . . . their lack of culture, a discovery of imperfection and fallibility in the Bible leads to its contemptuous rejection as a great priestly imposture." [2] This situation is still with us. The

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. vif.

remedy obviously is more culture, not only on the part of the group referred to but also on the part of the Bible's defenders.

At the opposite extreme is the case of the group—mostly bibliolaters by inheritance—whose Bible study yields vagaries and extravagances of various sorts: emphasis on moral freedom interpreted as license to do as they please, conviction of sinlessness, assurance of the imminent end of the world, etc. The remedy is the same as in the case of the previous group, and it does not appear that there is any other remedy. Probably many in this group are not susceptible to culture and therefore are hopeless, but they are not usually numerous enough to be very dangerous.

There is a third group, however, about whom concern may well be felt. I refer to those who, while possessed of intelligence and perhaps of culture of a one-sided sort, are bibliolatrous in their conception of the Bible, and hence quite logically stand in the way of the free progress of culture. Sometimes they have been strong enough to control great religious organizations and serious harm has resulted. For the most part they are sincere and have good intentions. The great trouble is that where their outlook is dominant the Scriptures afford an all too convenient tool for reactionary vested interests. To those who for reasons honorable or otherwise regard change as undesirable

it is very satisfactory to be able to point to a Bible which is conceded to be an infallible guarantor of the status quo. More enlightened and forward-looking individuals are then persecuted, and progress is in a measure checked, on the ground of opposition to the Scriptures. Such a work as Andrew D. White's *History of the Warfare Between Science and Theology* provides mournful evidence of how this has worked out in Christian history.

The relation between Scriptures and freedom of thought is itself a large subject. I shall deal with it briefly in closing this chapter. "The belief that a sacred book is final authority often results in limitation of freedom of thought," says Toy. "Certain things are excluded from discussion." [8] In fairness we should remind ourselves that free thought is not necessarily good thought. It is often erratic, foolish, mischievous. And when religious bodies have opposed it, using their Scriptures as a weapon, they have often done good service to the cause of order and stability. Yet the fact remains that in the long run such opposition is abortive, whether we choose to call it wrong or not. Freedom of thought will not, ultimately, be checked. In one or other of two ways it will assert itself in spite of Scriptures. One way is through methods of interpretation which make it possible to find almost anything

[8] Toy, *op. cit.*, p. 562.

in this or that passage of Scripture. The other way is through the abandonment of bibliolatry and the adoption of a freer view of what Scripture is and what allegiance to it means.

The former method has been widespread, and has often been used, as it were, unconsciously. The most ardent bibliolaters have frequently developed their thought, supposedly based on Scripture, in directions far afield from the real meaning of the Scripture. This is particularly true of what is called allegorical interpretation, the underlying principle of which is that beneath the surface meaning of much of the contents of sacred writings a deeper meaning is to be looked for. It was used by the Stoics in dealing with Homer and Hesiod, and from them it was taken over by Alexandrian Jews, notably Philo. From this source in turn it found its way into Christianity, where it flourished for many centuries. Hindu philosophers have used it in explaining the stories of the Puranas, and its use is to be found among the Sufis of Persia. In current use of the Christian Scriptures we do not meet with much allegory of the more extreme sort. Yet we constantly meet, in sermons and books, with a similar phenomenon: preachers and writers supposedly expounding Scripture but actually developing thoughts that are independent of the passage in hand if not contradictory to it. Efforts to harmonize the creation

stories of Genesis with modern science will serve as a relatively extreme example, now becoming less frequent.

Toy thinks that the influence of this sort of thing is bad. It "accustoms the religious public to logical distortions, and it nourishes a disingenuousness that easily becomes immoral." [4] Yet it is possible to maintain that in the past it has performed an important service as an offset to bibliolatry, and that it did no great harm for the reason that it was in harmony with the general cultural outlook. But in our own time, in Western Christendom, the situation has changed greatly, and Toy's criticism probably is valid.

It would seem, then, that in our modern world we must look to the second of the two methods, rather than the first, of achieving an *entente cordiale* between Scripture and freedom of thought. We must abandon bibliolatry and all that goes with it, let Scripture say (as nearly as we can tell) what its writers intended it to say, and give to freedom of thought an equally clear field. It can scarcely be questioned that such an attitude does truer honor to the Scriptures. It enables them to speak with their own voice, and when they have this liberty they are likely to show that the voice is not without authority. It was but a doubtful honor which was bestowed upon them in making them the

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 562f. *Cf.* Widgery, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

supposed censors of human thought in general. Actually they were but tools in the hands of the dominant religious groups. And if it is still thought desirable for religion to exert an influence on the progress of culture (as I believe it is) that will best be done through training up cultural leaders who have the religious outlook without in the least being bibliolaters.

CHAPTER X

THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURES: SCIENTIFIC VERSUS "PRACTICAL"

A VAST amount of labor has been devoted to the interpretation of Scriptures. Much of the later matter which constitutes the Scriptures themselves is intended to be interpretative of the earlier. After this comes the Tradition, and following the Tradition an endless array of commentaries reaching down through the centuries, not to mention the thousands of volumes of theological and religious works in which the aim of interpreting the Scriptures is more or less dominant though not so explicit as in the commentaries. It is true that the Scriptures do not stand entirely alone in this respect. Commentaries on Homer and Shakespeare have been numerous; indeed practically all outstanding literature of the past has been the object of this sort of effort. Yet in the enormous extent of the interpretative matter which they have inspired the Scriptures are unrivaled. Their great age is one reason for this, but not the main reason. It has been due mainly to their exalted position: to the belief that they and they alone

could show to man the way of life. Had it not been for the influence of this belief it is safe to say that the literature which has grown up around the Bibles of mankind would not have reached a fraction of the extent which it has reached.

The technical term most commonly applied to the interpretation of Scripture is *exegesis,* i.e. a *leading out.* In theory what the interpreter is doing is drawing out the true meaning of the part of Scripture with which he is dealing, be it small or large, so that it will be the more clearly understood. No doubt most of those who have engaged in the work of exegesis have thought that this was what they were doing, but as a matter of fact the product of their labors has very often been *eisegesis,* not a drawing out but a *putting in.* We have already touched upon this in the last chapter. The reason for it is clear, and is not at all discreditable to the would-be interpreters. Their primary interest has been practical, not scientific. They have wanted most of all to be helpful, to provide needed truth and guidance. Ideas and thoughts which appealed to them as true and edifying were naturally assumed to be Biblical, and if Biblical study yielded ideas which did not seem edifying then obviously some other interpretation must be sought. Augustine, for example, applied a twofold test to the product of Biblical study: it must (1) tend to establish the reign of love, and (2) be in harmony

with the accepted doctrines of the church.[1] From a scientific point of view neither of these two principles can be defended. Both might yield real exegesis fairly often—since there is much matter in the Bible that is conducive to the reign of love and in harmony with church doctrines—but it would be in spite of the principles, not because of them. From a practical point of view, however, they have great merit, and the same is to be said of much Scripture interpretation which scientifically is bad.

The underlying principle of scientific interpretation is to allow the varied writings which compose the Scriptures to speak each with its own voice: to say what its author meant for it to say. The underlying principle of "practical" interpretation is to draw from the Scriptures that which is edifying to the interpreter and those for whom he interprets. In the past the practical approach has been all but universal. To use the scientific approach in any adequate fashion has not been possible until the modern period. To make the original meaning of a passage of Scripture the primary consideration implies an equipment with which to find out what that original meaning was—an equipment of textual and literary and historical criticism, not to mention psychology and sociology. The task is often diffi-

[1] See Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine,* III, 10, 23, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* First Series.

cult, sometimes it is impossible of accomplishment. In past centuries there was not the equipment for it, nor was there, with rare exceptions, the sense of its importance. The tendency was rather to disparage the bare, "simple" meaning and to seek for deeper meanings underneath. What the original writer may have had in view was of small importance. He was but the mouthpiece of the inspiring spirit in any case. Indeed for the rank and file of users of Scriptures in the past the original writers have scarcely existed: the sacred writings were of divine origin.

Now there is a good deal to be said for this point of view and practice. It is highly desirable that a community or group should have the best guidance its leaders can furnish, and in religious groups which have sacred writings these writings are going to be used in the giving of that guidance. Where no sense of obligation to the original meaning operates the leaders have a freedom which is not without advantages. They can the more easily make their interpretations "practical." In one way or another Scripture basis will readily be found for whatever teachings they think the people need. Scientific interpretation, on the other hand, may seem to have a narrowing, limiting influence on the guidance which the community receives from its religious leaders.

It is certainly possible that with the increased applica-

tion of the scientific attitude toward them Scriptures will seem to be less important for practical religion than was formerly thought and so will fall into disuse, but as yet such a conclusion is not justified by the evidence. Outside of Judaism and Christianity scientific interpretation scarcely exists, and even in these religions the older attitude is still the prevailing one. On *a priori* grounds there is good reason for expecting that scientific interpretation of the great Bibles will prove to be practical interpretation as well. A literature which has had its genesis in deep human interests is likely to be capable of reapplication to human needs and interests, even though centuries or millenniums have passed and it has been carried into alien lands. The underlying issues of life show much sameness in all climes and ages.

In Protestant Christianity, where the shift toward scientific interpretation has gone farther than anywhere else, interesting data may be gathered but not such as to warrant far-reaching conclusions. The fact that liberal Protestant preachers often lack sureness of touch in their handling of the Bible has already been referred to, as has also the increasing use of non-biblical materials in the religious education enterprise. The smaller proportion of time and attention given to Biblical studies in the more progressive theological schools may be cited as further evidence pointing in the same direction. On the other side perhaps the most striking thing

to be noted is that the ideals of the Hebrew prophets and of Jesus, thrown into relief by scientific Bible study, have made a deep impression in our time. Even Paul, rescued from the theologians, is having a chance to reveal the power and charm of his personality and the significance of his religious outlook, while the rich devotional matter of the Psalms at least retains its old-time effectiveness. But it cannot be denied that extensive parts of the Bible have failed to approve themselves as of much value in the upbuilding of individual lives or in social betterment. Subjected to eisegesis they have yielded large fruitage of real or fancied edification, but when exegesis is applied to them they are comparatively barren. It may be conjectured, then, that while scientific interpretation will not result in general disuse of the Scriptures it will have the effect of directing attention to certain parts of them to the neglect of other parts: the canon idea will cease to have practical significance.

In any case it is idle to suppose that the tide will again turn in favor of eisegesis. Too often its actual effect has not been to give unhampered utterance to the best minds of the present but rather to bolster up dogmas from the past with artificial authority, or else to provide support for unorthodox fancies which were as unsound and unprofitable as they were heretical. And even such advantage as it had in an unscientific age can scarcely be carried forward into the thought world of

tomorrow. Once clearly seen to be false it will not be able to maintain itself indefinitely on the ground that it is practical. Enlightened religion will increasingly demand of its interpreters of Scripture that they interpret Scripture, and in so far as practical needs cannot be met in this way they will be met in other ways.

Meanwhile there is need for clearer thinking on the whole subject than the majority of our religious leaders have yet given to it. Those who have occasion to make much use of the Bible in the meeting of human needs will almost inevitably read their own thoughts into the Biblical materials at times. Toward this we may be very lenient. It is altogether possible that what the preacher puts into his text may be of more use to his people than what is actually there. Yet a constant yielding to this tendency is bad for the preacher and bad for those to whom he ministers. There is reason to believe that time devoted to scientific Bible study would strengthen far more than it would weaken the practical value and effectiveness of contemporary preaching. Certainly if preaching is to be practical in any real and worthwhile sense it must have substance, solidity. One way in which this may be had is through hard work at Biblical exegesis. Preachers who have not tried it are recommended to do so.

CHAPTER XI

THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURES: PROFESSIONAL VERSUS NON-PROFESSIONAL

In the history of Scriptures, taken as a whole, professional interpretation has been the rule, non-professional the exception. We have seen how generally the Scriptures have been an instrument of the priesthood, both in their making and in their use. And where control has been in the hands of a class other than priests—as the scribes of the Jews and the ulema of Islam—it has nevertheless been a professional control of a very rigid sort.

It is true that there have been frequent revolts against this professional monopoly of Scriptures. Such great religious movements as the rise of Buddhism out of Brahmanism, the rise of Christianity out of Judaism, and the rise of Methodism out of Anglicanism, have all had as one of their aspects a disposition to break away from the type of Scripture teaching which was current among the professional interpreters. But it is also true that in each case the revolt has had only spasmodic effectiveness: with decline of the original enthusiasm of the movement the Scriptures have usually

passed again into professional control. Early Buddhists attacked the Brahman pundits of their day,[1] but Buddhism was by and by to have its own canon of Scriptures with monks playing the rôle of pundit. Jesus and Paul disagreed radically with contemporary Jewish scribism, but in later centuries Christian priests and scholars were to develop a professional casuistry in the handling of the Bible quite equal to that of the scribes. And so in other cases.

One reason for the monopoly of Scripture interpretation held by professional classes in the past is obvious. Until modern times copies of the sacred writings have been expensive and not readily accessible, and the ability to read them has been far from general. Moreover, though the professional interpreters may have been poorly qualified, few from other classes were as well equipped as they. Interesting accounts have come down to us of Biblical discussions which took place in the court of Charlemagne, with the learned Alcuin as leader. On one occasion the emperor himself raised the question as to what hymn it was which Jesus and his disciples sang after their last supper together: none of the Gospels had any record of it. Alcuin replies by explaining at length the meaning of the term "hymn," giving views as to this particular hymn held by different

[1] See e.g. the Tevigga Sutta, in *SBE* XI, 159-203. *Cf.* Max Müller, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion* (N. Y., Scribner, 1879), pp. 136f.

interpreters, and finally stating what his own opinion is. He believes that what was sung was nothing else than the prayer of Jesus which we have in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel![2] How satisfactory this fantastic explanation was to Charlemagne and his courtiers we do not know, but it is safe to assume that there was no serious attempt at rebuttal. In the main the non-clerical populace, including those of high rank in other walks of life, have taken their Scriptures as mediated to them by professional interpreters. This state of affairs has prevailed the more because it has usually been satisfactory to the ruling powers, whether of church or state, to have it so. Experience told them that otherwise seeds of revolt were likely to be sown

Nevertheless the non-professional use of Scriptures has been an interesting and not unimportant aspect of religious history, especially in the case of Judaism and Christianity. A passage in I Maccabees bears important witness to the practice among the Jews in the Maccabean period. Among other cruelties inflicted by Antiochus Epiphanes and his minions it is related that

> they rent in pieces the books of the Law which they found, and set them on fire. And wheresoever was found with any a book of the covenant, and if any consented to the Law, the king's sentence

[2] See Ernst von Dobschütz, *The Influence of the Bible on Civilization* (N. Y., Scribner, 1914), p. 60.

> delivered him to death. Thus did they in their might unto Israel, to those that were found month by month in the cities.[3]

This would seem to presuppose an extensive private possession and use of the Law. As to the Prophets—the second great part of the Hebrew canon—it is pertinent to cite the case of the Ethiopian eunuch referred to in Acts who was reading in Isaiah as he rode in his chariot. (The eunuch appears to have accepted Philip's aid as interpreter without demanding priestly or scribal credentials.) Specific evidence of this sort is not abundant, yet it is clear that in the period of the rise of Christianity the Jewish Bible was thought of as a book for the people in general, for the home as well as the synagogue.[4]

And Christianity, taking over the Jewish Scriptures, took over also this view of their use. Timothy, a Gentile convert who had a Jewish mother, is said to have known the holy Scriptures from childhood.[5] For a thousand years and more there was no disposition on the part of the church to regard the sacred writings as "mysteries," to be reserved for priestly interpretation and for use in religious services. This idea was common among oriental cults in existence in the Mediter-

[3] I Maccabees 1:56-58.
[4] See Adolph Harnack, *Bible Reading in the Early Church* (N. Y., Putnam, 1922), pp. 28-31.
[5] II Tim. 3:15.

ranean world at the time of Christianity's origin but it was not adopted by the new religion. Quite the contrary, indeed. Paul and other early Christian missionaries made much use of matter in the Jewish Scriptures which they regarded as prophetic of Christ and the church, hence they naturally encouraged the custom of private Bible study. We read of the Jews at Beroea "examining the Scriptures daily" in the effort to form a judgment of their own as to the truth of what Paul and Silas proclaimed in their synagogue.[6]

The evidence of the Apostolic Fathers and Apologists of the second century points in the same direction. No doubt during this period the Scriptures were known mainly through public reading, with which would go official or semi-official interpretation. Copies were expensive and most of the Christians were poor. Yet when we find much of the literature of the time saturated with Biblical quotations and reminiscences we can scarcely avoid the conclusion that readers as well as writers had a good deal of first-hand familiarity with such material.

By the time of Irenaeus and Tertullian there was good reason, in appearance at least, for attempting to withdraw the Scriptures from the laity. Dangerous heresies had arisen, threatening the very life of the church, and the heretics were making powerful use of

[6] Acts 17:11.

Biblical matter in support of their theories. But the Scriptures were not withdrawn. The church's leaders seem never to have thought of such an expedient. On the contrary we find them urging the duty and privilege of Scripture reading by individuals and in homes. Origen, who himself may be said to head the long line of professional commentators on the Christian Bible, was far from being committed to the idea of clerical monopoly. He even declares that the true spiritual sense often is best grasped not by the higher clergy or by learned doctors but by one who belongs to a lower order of ministry or to the laity.[7]

In the fourth century evidence for the private use of the Bible is increasingly abundant, but at the same time a change in the situation appears. The strenuous insistence that lay men and women must search the Scriptures is producing two opposite reactions. Some of the laity are revolting, declaring that they have other things to do besides reading the Bible; others, taking the exhortations seriously, are giving up their vocations and becoming monks or nuns, feeling that only thus can they live up to the ideal. Hearers of the great Chrysostom are represented as defending themselves:

> I am tied down as a government official to the courts; I have to give my attention to public business; I carry on a trade; I must look after my wife

[7] Origen, *Hom. ii in Num.* See Harnack, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

> and children and servants; in short, I am a man of the world; it is not my business to read the Bible; that is the business of people who have renounced the world and devote themselves to a lonely life upon the tops of the mountains.[8]

Chrysostom retorts that "ye need it far more than they," but the very persistence with which he harps upon the subject shows the seriousness of the obstacle which he has encountered.

Chrysostom died in 407. The western Roman Empire collapsed in the same century and through the "Dark Ages" following there was little incentive or opportunity for independent popular use of the Bible. But in the eleventh century, especially in southern France, there occurred a revival of Bible reading. In the twelfth century Peter Waldo, a merchant of Lyons, became leader of the movement, which spread farther afield in France and into Spain. Related groups came into existence in Italy and spread thence into Germany. These people understood the Bible as the monks understood it, placing the emphasis on ascetic practices such as fasting and poverty, but they tried to carry out this ideal without withdrawing from the world. The church, now long accustomed to monopolizing the Bible and alarmed by erratic doctrinal tendencies of

[8] Chrysostom, *Hom. iii de Lazaro;* quoted by Harnack, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

the Waldensians, tried to suppress them. Pope Innocent III declared in 1199 that while the study of the Bible by the clergy was to be encouraged all laymen were to be kept from it, since it was too profound for them to understand. · In short the church in the Middle Ages took a stand which the early church, with at least equal provocation, had not taken, that of withdrawing the Bible from the laity in principle. The enforcement of the principle varied greatly.

The Protestant movement of the sixteenth century went farther than the Waldensian movement of the twelfth. It broke with the old church entirely, and established itself as a strong competitor. One use which it tried to make of the freedom thus gained was to restore the early emphasis on general Bible reading and study as a means of inspiration and guidance for *non-ascetic* Christian living. The use of the Scriptures in home circles and in private devotions was encouraged and became widely characteristic of the Protestant churches, particularly in Germany and the Anglo-Saxon countries. This continued until the latter part of the nineteenth century. It was only in a limited sense, however, that it led to non-professional interpretation. The official theology, of professional origin, provided standards of interpretation which were all but inescapable.

It remains that we should look briefly at the present

situation in Protestantism. Two points are worthy of particular notice.

In the first place, professional interpretation is still very much in evidence, but it is changing in character. It is becoming less clerical, more independent and scientific. There is a notable increase in the proportion of Biblical scholars who are not ordained clergymen and in freedom from obvious clerical bias on the part of those who are ordained. Among ministers in pastorates the change naturally is slower, yet here also it is gradually taking place. Whether it is to be welcomed or deplored depends on one's point of view. Here as elsewhere there is danger that the merit of being independent and scientific will be offset by the demerit of being particularistic and nonvital. German Biblical scholarship in the nineteenth century illustrated this danger, but it also gave substantial proof that progress lies only in this direction.

In the second place, effort is being made to encourage and stimulate non-professional use of the Bible (which has been on the decline) through the circulation of a great variety of popular "helps" in book and pamphlet form. In Great Britain and America the publication of translations in the everyday speech has been a prominent feature of this movement. Some effect is undoubtedly being produced, but it is not likely to prove very great or permanent. With the increase of general

culture a larger non-professional use of Scripture is made possible, but it is also true that competition is enormously increased.

In this connection it is to be noted that modern religious education, in distinction from the earlier Sunday-school type of effort, is not moving in the direction of a larger independent use of the Bible by the laity. As we have seen, it is distinguishing between moral and religious education on the one hand and the teaching and study of the Bible on the other hand, and is making the former rather than the latter its primary aim. It continues to take much source material from the Bible, but the interpretation is usually provided ready-made, from professional interpreters of recognized standing. It is probably better interpretation than has ever been provided before, both scientific and practical considerations being taken into account, but in so far as it stimulates first-hand searching of the Scriptures that result is incidental.

It would seem that the old difficulties in the way of placing large dependence on non-professional use of the Scriptures are still with us: the lack of the time for Bible reading and study which is required if it is really to serve as a guide and inspiration to all of life; the lack of qualifications for such study, and the unprofitable if not disastrous results following when the study is pursued without the needed qualifications. Probably in

the future as in the past it will be through the work of professional interpreters—clergymen, scholars, trained teachers—that Scriptures will exert their greatest influence for good, will make their largest contribution to the religious and moral progress of humanity.

Yet it is possible, through the ordinary channels of education, for the cream of Scripture to become a treasure in the possession of almost everyone, constantly enriching and improving life without special aid from trained interpreters. And it may be added that professional interpretation stands greatly in need of intelligent non-professional criticism. The unenlightened handling of Biblical matter in print and from the pulpit which is now too common will vanish in proportion as the rank and file of readers and hearers cease to be impressed by it.

CHAPTER XII

THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURES: COLLECTIVE VERSUS INDIVIDUAL

To interpret Scriptures adequately is a collective task. When the Protestant reformers discovered that complete reliance on the *testimonium internum Spiritus Sancti* in the individual was not satisfactory their experience had back of it something more fundamental than the mere fact that in the sixteenth century culture was not far enough advanced for such individualism to work satisfactorily. There is small room to expect that culture will ever be far enough advanced. Even a slight acquaintance with the history of Scriptures will suffice to show that to interpret and apply them well is enormously difficult, a task involved in all sorts of complexities. Clearly the best results are not to be secured by detached individual efforts.

And in the past this has quite generally been recognized. According to Mohammedan tradition the Prophet had said, "My followers will never agree in error," and thus had established the principle of *consensus* as the arbiter in interpretation.[1] The dogmatic interpre-

[1] See Widgery, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

tation which has so largely prevailed in the Christian use of Scripture has likewise been collective, and therein lies its power. The great creeds and confessions of Christendom have been subject to limitations of knowledge and to partisan bias, which have been sources of weakness; yet they have been made up largely of the accumulated thought and wisdom of the best minds of the generation then living and of preceding generations, applied to the interpretation of the Scriptures, and this has been a great source of strength.

In our own time collective interpretation is still dominant, but in Protestant Christianity an important change is under way—a change in respect to what is accepted as the mouthpiece of the collective voice. Increasingly it is to the consensus of opinion of free scientific scholarship rather than of dogmatic formulas that we look.

At some points this change may be thought to involve loss. The consensus thus secured may seem to be less complete, and the results may seem less valuable.

That the consensus is less complete is not as true as is often supposed. A very large measure of agreement has been reached by competent Biblical scholars, and disagreement constantly yields to agreement as obscure points are cleared up by further investigation. Doubtless scholarship will never furnish such a basis for complete accord as is provided by one of the dogmatic formulas. But the harmony which dogma thus

imposes upon Scripture is artificial and unreal, and the formulas disagree one with another. The scholarship of to-day gives much better promise than dogma ever has given of serving as a basis for general harmony of opinion, independent of sect, as to what the Scriptures mean and what their value is. This promise applies not only to Protestantism, or to Christianity, but in a wider range. As evidence may be cited the rapprochement of Christians, Jews, Hindus, and Confucianists, and their mutual appreciation of each other's sacred writings, in circles influenced by modern scholarship.

Whether the results are deemed less valuable depends on the point of view. Scholarship is more modest than dogma. It does not make as exalted claims for the interpretations which it presents, does not attribute to them finality. Hence to those who regard definiteness, certainly, as foremost criteria of value the shift of dependence from dogma to scholarship will seem to involve loss, to be a move in the wrong direction. The Scriptures as modern scholarship presents them to us do not offer definite formulas for salvation, absolute solutions for the problems of life and destiny. Nothing is to be gained by disguising this fact or belittling its significance. On the other hand it may fairly be claimed for scientific scholarship that it furnishes spectacles with which to see in Scripture *such value as is really there,* and to see it with the clearest vision now attainable.

What place is left, then, for individual interpretation? A large place. For one thing, individuals have performed and no doubt will continue to perform the very important function of leading revolts from time to time. They may thus save collective interpretation from the danger of becoming hardened, static. Dogma has from its very nature been subject to this danger and at the same time unwilling to be rescued from it. Individuals who have presumed to dissent from its view of Scripture have had unpleasant experiences. With modern scholarship it ought to be quite otherwise, since it is committed to the principle of freedom and makes no claim to finality. Its attitude is indeed different, yet scientific scholarship is by no means immune from the danger of assuming too quickly that this or that point is settled. Sometimes even its "assured results" need to be revised in the light of further investigation by non-conforming individuals. The "Two-document Hypothesis" as to the sources of the first three Gospels in the New Testament will serve as an illustration. Something not very different from the present Gospel of Mark has clearly served as the main backbone of all three, and a lot of additional material has obviously been used by the compilers of Matthew and Luke. Thus far results reached by New Testament criticism nearly a century ago still stand and would seem to be permanent. But the further assumption that the great bulk of the

matter not from Mark was from *one* additional document was too hasty. After long having been taken as almost axiomatic it is now being abandoned, thanks to evidence adduced by a few dissenting scholars. And so it has happened occasionally in other cases. The validity of collective conclusions will always depend largely on the vigilance with which independent minds check up errors and the zeal and ability which they bring to the defense of opinions contrary to those generally received.

And there is a second point of wider application. Every person who aspires to be cultured should acquaint himself at least in a general way with the available knowledge about the Scriptures of his people, if not of other peoples as well. The majority cannot be expected to go much farther than this, but the minority who undertake to investigate at first hand and form judgments of their own are likely to find great interest and profit therein. This applies not only to Biblical scholars but to those in other walks of life as well. It is to be remembered that while the amount of first-hand knowledge any one of us can have in any field is limited, such knowledge is unique in character and value. One may lack it—even in an important field—and still qualify as a cultured individual, but he will do well to observe a becoming modesty in matters per-

taining to that field. To know what dogma or scholarship says about the Scriptures is not really to know the Scriptures.

I would remark finally that the individual who wishes to live richly and worthily should determine to get guidance and inspiration from the Scriptures *if he can and as he can,* but in any case to get guidance and inspiration *somewhere.* A good life is not self-sustaining: that is the elementary fact to be reckoned with. The soul must be fed as well as the body, and no more serious responsibility rests upon us than that of finding out what best feeds our souls and supplying them with that food. The Scriptures are great depositories of matter that in one way or another has approved itself as helpful to generations of the past. Some of this matter, almost beyond question, is capable of being helpful to every one of us. We should give it a chance. Thanks to improved translations and other helps this is now possible, in the case of the Jewish-Christian Bible, as it has never been before. Yet Scriptures are not religion's only resources, and there is no need to deny or to try to explain away the fact that multitudes of people find food for their souls better in other ways than through Bible reading. It is for each of us to seek God where experience teaches us that we can find him—not failing, however, to give heed

to collective as well as individual experience. Extreme individualism is folly, whether in the interpretation of Scripture or in the larger and more important task of nourishing one's life.

PART II

OTHER GREAT BIBLES COMPARED WITH THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN BIBLE

CHAPTER XIII

THE VEDAS (BRAHMANIC)

IN point of age the Vedas somewhat outrank the Jewish Bible. The period of origin of the former may be put at about the twelfth to the sixth centuries B.C., and of the latter about the ninth to the second centuries, though there is a good deal of uncertainty about the dates and they are to be regarded as only approximate. In any case both are ancient from the point of view of the history of literature, and their antiquity makes them the more valuable as sources for the study of religious and cultural development. However, the kind of importance which was once attached to the antiquity of Scriptures is attached to it no longer. Early Christian apologists made much of the argument that Moses antedated the Greek philosophers and that therefore they had borrowed from him and were inferior to him, but such argument has ceased to have weight. The relative age of the Rig-Veda and Genesis has little bearing on their value as guides to life.

A second point of comparison is met with when we note the vast extent and uncertain bounds of the

Vedas as compared with the relatively small bulk and clear outline of the Jewish-Christian Bible. If the Old Testament included the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, and the Talmud, and the New Testament embraced the writings of the fathers, orthodox and heretical, to the fifth century, then our Bible would be more nearly analogous to that of Brahmanism in extent and outline. There would still be left the vast theological and mystical literature of the Middle Ages to play the rôle of Smriti (Tradition).

But we are not to jump at the conclusion that the advantage in this comparison is all on one side. A small and compact Bible no doubt is more practically usable, but on the other hand where bibliolatry prevails—as it still does, in the main, among the adherents of both Scriptures—there is a good deal to be said for having it rest on a broad foundation. The theory of verbal inspiration is perhaps more likely to do actual harm when applied to a book which may have a wide reading than when a large body of more or less esoteric literature is thus regarded. The situation in Brahmanism is roughly comparable with that in Catholic Christianity, where an indefinite body of extra-Biblical matter has a position almost equal to Scripture.[1] There are advantages and disadvantages on both sides. In either case the real influence is exerted by a compara-

[1] See above, pp. 67f.

tively small part of the literary heritage, whatever be the theory as to the range of special sacredness.

To pass to more essential characteristics, the Vedas are more ritualistic and speculative, less historical and ethical, and less consistently monotheistic, than the Jewish-Christian Bible.

We have seen that the tendency to emphasize ritual is met with in most Bibles. It follows naturally from the close relation which usually obtains between Scriptures and priests. But if preoccupation with sacrifices and the formal side of religion in general is taken as one of the distinguishing marks of Scriptures it must be said that in this regard the Vedas are Scriptures par excellence. What Haug says of the conception of sacrifice met with in one of the Brahmanas may be given more general application:

> The sacrifice is regarded as the means for attaining power over this and the other world, over visible as well as invisible things, animate as well as inanimate creatures. Who knows its proper application, and has it duly performed, is in fact looked upon as the real master of the world; for any desire he may entertain, if it be even the most ambitious, can be gratified, any object he has in view can be obtained by means of it. The *Yajna* (sacrifice), taken as a whole, is conceived to be a kind of machinery, in which every piece

must tally with the other, or a sort of long chain in which no link may be wanting, or a staircase, by which one may ascend to heaven, or a personage, endowed with all the characteristics of a human body.[2]

A religion of sacrifices and ritual is assumed in the early Vedic hymns, dealt with ad nauseam in the Brahmanas, and at least tolerated in the Upanishads. It is nearly all-pervasive. The Brahman priests were opportunistic: what they could not successfully oppose they absorbed into their system and turned to their advantage. Thus the popular magic of the Atharva-Veda and the philosophy of the Upanishads both are made to have at least a surface conformity with the priestly scheme. The dominance of the priestly outlook here is far more complete than in the Old Testament, and with the New Testament of course there is no comparison. Still, it is a fact and an important fact that the Rig-Veda points back to a time before the Brahmans had become all-powerful, while the Upanishads offer rich materials for the development of a religion not dependent on ritual.

There is little of the speculative element in the Old Testament. The Hebrew mind did not incline that way. In the New Testament there is a larger propor-

[2] Haug, Aitareya Brahmana, I, 73; quoted by John McKenzie, *Hindu Ethics* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1922), pp. 28f.

tion of it, thanks to Greek influence, but the more concrete and practical Jewish outlook is still in the ascendency. In the Vedas the matter stands quite otherwise. As Hebrew experience and thought tended to find expression in the ethical maxims of "wisdom" books such as Proverbs, or in the concrete and highly colored philosophizing of apocalyptic books like Daniel and Revelation, so the more subtle Hindu mind expressed itself naturally in abstract speculations about the ultimate nature of the world and of man such as we find in the Upanishads.

The teachings of the Upanishads revolve around two conceptions—Atman and Brahma. When taken strictly Atman denotes the individual self and Brahma the world Self. The former, as known, is then used to explain the latter, as unknown. But the great thesis of the Upanishads is that Brahma and Atman—the individual soul and the Soul of the universe—are one, and that to attain the knowledge of their oneness is to have solved the riddle of existence and found the way of salvation. "Whoever knows this, 'I am Brahma,' becomes the All. Even the gods are not able to prevent him from becoming it. For he becomes their Self (Atman)." [3] The formula "*That art thou*" [4] gives terse

[3] Brihadaranyaka Upanishad I, iv, 6; quoted by Arthur A. Macdonell, *A History of Sanskrit Literature* (N. Y., Appleton, 1900), p. 221.

[4] Chhandogya Upanishad, vi, 8-16; quoted by Macdonell, *idem.*

expression to the idea. It represents a solution, but also a starting point; for the Vedic philosophers wrestle endlessly with the question of the nature of this all-embracing Soul.

Naturally they entertained presuppositions which are different from those of thinkers of our time, and they sought knowledge through pure thought and revelation rather than through inductive experiment. Their thinking followed the lines of theosophy rather than of philosophy as understood in the Western world. The Upanishads are "a mixture of half-poetical, half-philosophical fancies, of dialogues and disputations dealing tentatively with metaphysical questions." [5] It was not until centuries later that their ideas were reduced to a system in the Vedanta philosophy. Their great value has been in furnishing a background for constructive thinking on fundamental problems by cultured Hindus, who have used their materials with good effect. Our heritage of ancient Greek philosophy serves us in a similar way, though we do not count it as a part of our Scriptures. Nor have we made so much use of it recently, since inductive science began its reign. Most of us believe that this change in the basis of our thinking has been a change for the better, yet there is still a place for the type of thought and meditation which the Upanishads stimulate in India.

[5] Macdonell, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

Lack of historical matter and of the historical interest is a striking feature of the Vedas. Macdonell remarks that "history is the one weak spot in Indian literature. It is, in fact, non-existent." [6] Hebrew priests and scribes made much use of the legends and annals of their people, which they felt had great didactic value; while the religion of the New Testament is definitely bound up with a historical life and with events following its close. Not so with the Brahmans, who were preoccupied with their ritual and regarded action in the world of affairs as evil. Indeed the quietistic temper has been so strong in India that there has been little history of the national or epic sort to record.[7]

Perhaps it may fairly be claimed that from the point of view of religious value the Vedas are the better for this detachment. It has often been argued, with some cogency, that religion is embarrassed rather than helped by being tied up with history. Certainly the close connection of Jewish religion with Jewish nationalism has not been an unmixed blessing. Yet when we remember that history includes biography, and observe that the Vedas present to their adherents no Moses or Isaiah, no Jesus or Paul, no Zarathustra or Confucius, we are likely to feel that they are the weaker on that account. Doubtless the Vedas were not directly responsible, but in any case the lack of outstanding

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 10. [7] See *ibid.*, p. 11.

religious leaders would seem to have been characteristic of Brahmanism in the long Vedic period. It was not until the period was closing that Gautama the Buddha appeared, and it was left to another religion and another body of Scriptures to enshrine his greatness and perpetuate his memory.

The Vedas also have less of the ethical emphasis than the Jewish-Christian Bible. The idea of duty is abundantly present, but it is closely bound up with ritual on the one hand and asceticism on the other hand. In the Rig-Veda man's duty is mainly a matter of sacrificing in the proper manner to the gods, and in the Upanishads the supreme requirement for good living is renunciation, complete withdrawal from activity into "a meditation that becomes perfect when the mind can meditate on nothing." [8]

The point is not to be overstressed. Certain obligations to fellow-men, notably liberality and hospitality, are enjoined in the Rig-Veda, and there is condemnation of such wrongs as cheating and theft. Even more significant is the importance ascribed to *Rita* (Law or Order). Rita is manifested in nature, as in the flow of the rivers and the movement of the stars, but it also tends to take on an ethical quality. The Law which operates in the cosmos is seen to bear witness to an

[8] A. S. Geden, *Studies in the Religions of the East* (London, Kelly, 1913), p. 292.

underlying reliability, truth, in the eternal scheme of things, which in turn imposes the obligation of reliability and truthfulness upon men. Among the gods Varuna in particular is sponsor of this Law, and as such is proclaimed chief of the gods.[9] Again, in the Upanishads the fundamental idea of the individual self of man being one with the Supreme Self of the universe leads logically to opposition to vices, such as sensualism and materialism, which exalt the individual. The *Karma* doctrine also, stressing the conviction that as a man soweth so shall he reap,[10] has an obvious ethical bearing. But the fact that the term Rita dropped out of use as the Karma notion gained in prestige shows a development which can scarcely be called progress. The latter idea savors more of a merely mechanical retribution.

When all is said it remains true that ethics in the Vedas is a very secondary interest, and that the outlook on questions of social relationship is relatively primitive. The preoccupation with form in worship and passivity in living stand in the way of such concern for active righteousness as looms large in parts of the Jewish-Christian Bible.

We may attempt, finally, to compare the two Scrip-

[9] See e.g. Rig-Veda x, 124, 5; *cf.* also i, 25, which is quoted in part at the close of this chapter.

[10] *Cf.* Chhandogya Upanishad v, 10, 3-7, quoted at the close of this chapter.

tures in the vital matter of the quest for God which each reveals. The quest for God has always been a twofold quest. On the one hand it is a seeking for help, assurance, safety, for the individual and for those whose interests are bound up with his; on the other hand it is a searching after order, purpose, unity, in the larger scheme of things. The former kind of quest has naturally been the more common with the rank and file. It has tended to lead to animism and polytheism, a conception of superhuman powers closely connected with men and the things with which men have to do. The merit of such a conception is that it brings deity *near,* relates religion to life in concrete and intimate ways; its demerit is that it makes deity multiple and capricious, leaves the world a chaos rather than a cosmos, provides no adequate aid to seeing life whole. The latter kind of quest—engaging the intellectual few rather than the many—has led in the direction of a monotheism which has tended to be of either a deistic or a pantheistic type: one God but remote from the everyday affairs of men, enthroned as a distant King or identified with the great All of the universe. Here and there in religious history, however, the two quests have been more or less successfully combined, the result being a monotheism which is personal and ethical: a God who at the same time rules the universe, is guarantor of righteousness, and cares

for each individual—a God whose character is inferred not so much from the totality of phenomena, or from a magnifying to the *n*th power of ordinary human nature with all its capriciousness, as from what is looked upon as highest and best in human character and personality.

Now in the Vedas polytheism is intrenched far more strongly than in the Jewish-Christian Bible. Monotheism, of the pantheistic type, is developing side by side with it but not displacing it. The fusion of the two lines of quest into a personal ethical monotheism has not gone nearly as far as in the Old and New Testaments. In a few hymns of the Rig-Veda the god Varuna is addressed as righteous sovereign of the universe in language strikingly similar to that of the Hebrew Psalms, but elsewhere in the Vedas the prestige of Varuna is not maintained.

No doubt it is possible to hold that the advantage here is with the Vedas: that popular religion is always and necessarily polytheistic in fact and may as well be so avowedly, and that the pantheism of the Upanishads is more nearly in line with verified knowledge than is the ethical monotheism of the Hebrew prophets and the New Testament. But there are considerations on the other side. I shall mention two: (1) In spite of the lack of scientific proof the progress of religious thought, based on progressive experience, seems to be in the direction of ethical monotheism. This may be

illustrated even in India itself. The thought of the Bhagavad Gita, for example, is moving distinctly in this direction; and the Bhavagad Gita, though post-canonical, is said to be the favorite sacred book of present-day Hindus.[11] A further illustration may be seen in the Brahma Samaj movement of the nineteenth century, not to mention the progress of Christian missions in India. (2) Belief in a supreme and loving God is admittedly a "faith," a hypothesis, but in any case life must be lived and destiny worked out largely on the basis of theory, and of all theories this is the one which gives best promise of working satisfactorily—of meeting the pragmatic test. We may surmise therefore that on this vital point the future lies with the Jewish-Christian Bible rather than with the Vedas.

Yet the Hindu Scriptures are *their* Scriptures, and they offer abundant materials for inspiration, guidance, progress, and reconstruction. Christian attempts to commend Christ to the people of India need not be accompanied by any effort to supplant their Scriptures, once bibliolatry is abandoned on both sides.

I shall close the chapter with a number of illustrative quotations. The first, from the Upanishads, shows

[11] See F. Edgerton, *The Bhagavad Gita, or Song of the Blessed One: India's Favorite Bible* (Chicago, Open Court Pub. Co., 1925), pp. i, l, 92-94.

something of the complexity of the Karma idea when united with the doctrine of transmigration:

> They go to the smoke, from smoke to night, from night to the dark half of the moon, from the dark half of the moon to the six months when the sun goes to the south. But they do not reach the year.
>
> From the months they go to the world of the fathers, from the world of the fathers to the ether, from the ether to the moon. That is Soma, the king. Here they are loved (eaten) by the Devas, yes, the Devas love (eat) them.
>
> Having dwelt there till their (good) works are consumed, they return again that way as they came, to the ether, from the ether to the air. Then the sacrificer, having become air, becomes smoke, having become smoke, he becomes mist.
>
> Having become mist, he becomes a cloud, having become a cloud, he rains down. Then he is born as rice and corn, herbs and trees, sesamum and beans. From thence the escape is beset with most difficulties. For whosoever the persons may be that eat the food, and beget offspring, he henceforth becomes like unto them.
>
> Those whose conduct has been good, will quickly attain some good birth, the birth of a Brahman, or a Kshatriya, or a Vaisya. But those whose conduct has been evil will quickly attain

an evil birth, the birth of a dog, or a hog, or a Chandala.[12]

The following, also from the Upanishads, shows the ethical interest prominent (probably a sense of the need of being liberal and kind *to priests* gave the original impulse to the stressing of these virtues):

> The threefold offspring of Prajapati—gods, men, and devils (*asura*)—dwelt with their father Prajapati as students of sacred knowledge (*brahmacarya*). Having lived the life of a student of sacred knowledge, the gods said: "Speak to us, Sir." To them then he spoke this syllable, *"Da."* "Did you understand?" "We did understand," said they. "You said to us, 'Restrain yourselves (*damyata*).'" "Yes," said he, "you did understand." So then the men said to him: "Speak to us, Sir." To them then he spoke this syllable, *"Da."* "Did you understand?" "We did understand," said they. "You said to us, 'Give (*datta*).'" "Yes," said he, "you did understand." So then the devils said to him: "Speak to us, Sir." To them then he spoke this syllable, *"Da."* "Did you understand?" "We did understand," said they. "You said to us, 'Be compassionate (*dayadhvam*).'" "Yes," said he, "you did understand."

[12] Chhandogya Upanishad v, 10, 3-7; quoted by McKenzie, *op. cit.*, pp. 69f. See also R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1921), p. 233.

This same thing does the divine voice of thunder repeat: Da! Da! Da! that is, Restrain yourselves, Give, Be compassionate. One should practice this same triad: self-restraint, giving, compassion.[18]

I quote finally from one of the best known of the Varuna hymns of the Rig-Veda, which has a rather striking resemblance to some of the Hebrew Psalms:

However we break thy laws from day to day, men as we are,
O god, Varuna,
Do not deliver us unto death, nor to the blow of the furious;
nor to the anger of the spiteful!
To propitiate thee, O Varuna, we bind thy mind with songs,
as the charioteer a weary steed.
Away from me they flee dispirited, intent only on gaining
wealth; as birds to their nest.
When shall we bring hither the man who is victory to the
warriors, when shall we bring Varuna, the wide-seeing,
to be propitiated?

* * * *

He who knows the place of the birds that fly through the
sky, who on the waters knows the ships,
He, the upholder of order, who knows the twelve months,
with the offspring of each, and knows the month that is
engendered afterwards,
He who knows the track of the wind, of the wide, the bright,
and mighty; and knows those who reside on high,
He, the upholder of order, Varuna sits down among his
people; he, the wise, sits there to govern.

[18] Brihadaranyaka Upanishad v, 2. See Hume, *op. cit.*, p. 150; also Geden, *op. cit.*, pp. 293f.

From thence perceiving all wondrous things, he sees what has been and will be done.
May he, the wise son of time, make our paths straight all our days; may he prolong our lives!
O hear this my calling, Varuna, be gracious now; longing for help, I have called upon thee.
Thou, O wise God, art Lord of all, of heaven and earth: listen on thy way.[41]

[14] Rig-Veda *i*, 25; quoted by Geden, *op. cit.*, pp. 219f.

CHAPTER XIV

THE AVESTA (ZOROASTRIAN)

THE Avesta ranks with the Vedas and the Old Testament as among the oldest of the Bibles of mankind, and resembles them further in being a compilation of materials the origin of which extended over many centuries. We have seen that the earliest part, the Gathas, in all probability goes back to Zarathustra (Zoroaster) himself. There is no certainty as to when the great prophet lived. Iranian tradition fixes his date at 660-583 B.C. Authoritative opinion at present is divided between this date and an earlier one, around 1000 B.C. The latest matter in the Avesta apparently belongs to the Sassanian period of Persian history (226-642 A.D.).[1] We thus have a Scripture consisting of literary remains from a period of a thousand years or more.

In the matter of bulk the Avesta is relatively small, standing much closer to the Jewish-Christian Bible than to the Vedas in this respect. A great mass of its original material has been eliminated—not entirely by "natural selection." Alexander the Great is said to

[1] See Karl Geldner, article *"Zend-Avesta,"* in *EB* XXVIII, 969.

have burnt an Avesta of two million lines, and at the time of the Moslem conquest of Persia the work of destruction was carried further. Moulton remarks that "The description of this lost material . . . does not enable us to decide whether we have to blame or bless the memory of 'the accursed Sicander' [Alexander], or anonymous successors, who so largely reduced the bulk of what we are bound to read."[2] On the whole the loss may be taken with equanimity.

More important is the fact that in the Avesta, as is not the case in the Vedas, we encounter the figure of a great religious personality. The Avesta contains no biography of Zarathustra, not even such sketchy but relatively primitive accounts of his deeds as the Old Testament stories of Samuel and Elijah or the New Testament accounts of Jesus and Paul. All that we know about him comes from the Gathas, where information as to his life history is to be gathered only by inference. If the book of Acts and most of the Pauline epistles were nonexistent and we had only the Galatian and Corinthian letters as sources for the life of Paul the case would be somewhat analogous. The Apostle to the Gentiles would still be revealed as a towering and dynamic figure, and such a figure is the Zarathustra of the Gathas.

He appears to have sprung from the farming and

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 53.

cattle-raising class, at any rate he is much concerned with their interests. He feels himself called to be their champion and protector against the oppressions of raiding nomads, but at first they treat his pretensions to leadership with scorn. They want a leader indeed, but not such a weakling as this man. It is the familiar story of the prophet failing to find honor among his own people. In the Gathas the "Spirit of the Kine" is made to cry out in exasperation:

> That I must be content with the ineffectual word of an impotent man for my protector, when I wish for one that commands mightily! When ever shall there be one who shall give . . . effectual help?[8]

To Zarathustra the struggle with the cattle thieves was also something more than that: it was a contest between Good and Evil, Truth and the Lie, Light and Darkness. Probably it was because he seemed more concerned with these underlying issues than with the immediate task of defeating their enemies that his fellow-clansmen distrusted his leadership. There was also the fact that he attacked the gods and worship of the popular religion, which seemed to him antagonistic to truth and light, and so arrayed its priests against him. For a long time his way was difficult, but the trials of this period strengthened him. At last he won

[8] Yasna 29:8, Moulton's translation, *op. cit.*, p. 11. See also *SBE* XXXI, 11.

a prince, Vishtaspa, as convert and patron, and thus already before the prophet's death the foundations of a national religion were laid and the way prepared for the growth of an ethnic Scripture around the Gathas.

In the later Avesta the inevitable happens: the struggling prophet becomes a demigod. The estimate of him in the following passage from the Yashts is strikingly different from that quoted above from the Gathas:

> Mighty, who gives all life's comforts,
> The first teacher of the nations;
> Through whom came the Ashem Yohu,
> All the Spells in one including;
> Master, Judge of all creation,
> He the law, of all existence
> Best, to men himself revealed.
> Him the Bountiful Immortals
> Longed for—with the Sun accordant,
> Glad in faith with heart devoted—
> Master, Judge of all creation.
> In his birth and his up-growing
> Plants and Waters all exulted;
> In his birth and his up-growing
> All the creatures of the Holy
> Hailed the promise sure of blessing.[4]

The Vendidad tells of an attempt on the life of Zarathustra by Angra Mainyu, prince of the demons, which the prophet frustrates by repeating sacred words. He then determines to carry the war into the enemy's

[4] Yasht 13:90-93, Moulton's translation, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

country, attacking the demons with stones as big as a house, which he obtains from the supreme God and opponent of the demons, Ahura Mazda. At this point the prince of evil tries to win him over with flattering promises, so that the story becomes a temptation narrative. The prophet of course stands firm.[5]

These examples will serve to show how things were moving. In later literature all sorts of fantastic elaborations are to be met with, but with these we need not concern ourselves. The phenomenon is familiar. Jewish tradition elaborated the story of Moses, and Christian tradition of Jesus, in ways quite similar, though in these cases less of the legendary accretion gained a place for itself within the enclosure of the Scriptures proper. Such legends have their origin in attempts on the part of later followers to express their sense of the greatness of their prophets and founders. They give a desirable vividness and concreteness and become harmful only when dogmas are made of them or when advancing culture causes them to be offensive.

More seriously to the disadvantage of the Avesta is the fact that Zarathustra has no successors. This Bible has one great prophet—among humanity's greatest—but it has only one. He stands at the beginning, deterioration follows, and there is no significant

[5] Vendidad 19:1-7; *SBE* IV, 205f.

recovery in the later writings. The Vedas have their Upanishads, the Old Testament its Psalms and Proverbs, and the New Testament its Fourth Gospel. The Avesta has nothing which bears the marks, as these do, of a brilliant Silver Age.

And it must be said that this deterioration goes hand in hand with priestly dominance. The Magi in Persia played a rôle similar to that of the Brahmans in India. Under their control the religion of Zarathustra became formalized and mechanized. The all-important matter was to do honor to deity in precisely the correct forms, to give just the right attention to multitudinous details of ritual and conduct through which the demons might be worsted, to acquire and pass on a purely rote knowledge. At the close of the temptation story in the Vendidad, referred to above, Angra Mainyu demands of Zarathustra what weapons he purposes to use in destroying the powers of evil. The prophet is made to answer:

> The sacred mortar, the sacred cup, the Haomi, the words taught by Mazda, these are my weapons, my best weapons! By this Word will I strike, by this Word will I repel, by this weapon the good creatures will strike and repel thee, O evil-doer, Angra Mainyu! [6]

[6] Vendidad 19:8-9; *SBE* IV, 206.

In short, the mortar and cup used in concocting a "drink offering" and some sacred words employed as a magic spell—with such armament did later generations conceive of the prophet as having waged his warfare! These, however, are a priest's weapons, not a prophet's, and with such an outlook prevailing there was little reason for expecting the spirit of the real Zarathustra to be incarnated once more.

What had happened in Zoroastrianism was very much what was to happen in later centuries in Christianity, but as regards our present subject there is a significant difference: the Christian Scriptures have not been affected as have the Zoroastrian by the priestly dominance. Happily the New Testament canon was closed too soon for that (though even if there had not been this safeguard the later influx would have been more theological than ritualistic). The point is one of great practical importance. The New Testament has been able to serve as an instigator of revolts against formalism, and an aid to such revolts, as the Avesta has not. It has so served, playing an important part in the sixteenth-century Reformation, in Pietism and Wesleyanism, and in lesser uprisings of like import. To these Zoroastrian history has no parallel.

One of the best known features of the Avesta is its dualism. Life is conceived as a mighty struggle of

two opposing groups of forces. On one side is Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord (later Ormazd), on the other side Angra Mainyu, the Evil Spirit (later Ahriman). Each has his angelic minions and satellites, and all the beings and forces of creation, animate and inanimate, are partisans of the good or evil side. The struggle is going on all the time, but its definite issue lies ahead. Ahura Mazda will summon all his forces and the powers of evil will be overthrown. There will follow a universal judgment, the casting of the Evil Spirit and his followers into the abyss, the resurrection of the righteous dead, and the establishment of the Good Kingdom. Zarathustra himself seems to have expected that this great consummation would soon come: he hoped that he and his followers would witness it. With the lapse of time the expectation was postponed, but it did not vanish. The dualism of the Avesta is not thoroughgoing; it is everywhere assumed that right will triumph in the end.

Meanwhile, however, it is for man to work out his own salvation, and that by no means entirely through ritual observances. "Good thoughts, good words, good deeds"—these are the fundamentals; it is these that lead, as the case may be, to Paradise or Hell. In parts of the Avesta the ethical note is as strong as in any of the great Bibles. What we have here is not a religion indifferent to conduct, nor rules of conduct

independent of religion; it is a religion whose supreme God is righteous and demands righteousness. The Ahura Mazda of the Avesta is apparently identical with the Varuna of the Rig-Veda, and the different fate which this ethical deity meets in the two Scriptures is significant. In the Vedas he suffers eclipse, in the Avesta he is supreme.

It need scarcely be said that the eschatology and ethics which we have just sketched are strikingly similar to those of the Old and New Testament. In the case of the eschatology it may be that the resemblance is partly due to borrowing. It is noteworthy that ideas and imagery such as we have in Daniel and Revelation —involving the speedy and cataclysmic end of the present order of things—appear first in Judaism in the Exile period and after; they may well have been taken over by the Jews during their sojourn as captives in the Persian part of the world. But the same cannot be said of the ethics, which have deep roots in Jewish as well as Persian religious history. No doubt the influence of geography and climate is to be reckoned with. It is not surprising that peoples living in the stern highlands of Iran should develop an outlook on life similar to that of inhabitants of the rugged hills of Palestine, nor that this outlook should be in sharp contrast with that of dwellers in the hot plain of the Ganges.

Heading the list of Avestan virtues stand Honesty and Industry. The obligation of fair dealing is strongly upheld, whether the other party be friend or foe:

> Spitama, break not the Contract
> Made with sinner, made with faithful
> Comrade in thy Law, for Mithra
> Stands for sinner, stands for faithful.[7]

Mithra, referred to in this quotation, is the genius of truth and good faith. His very name means "contract," and in this same Yasht the supreme God, Ahura Mazda, declares that he has made Mithra worthy of worship even as himself.

Nowhere is the contrast between the Avesta and the Vedas more striking than in their attitude toward work, industry, active employment in the affairs of the world. The Zoroastrian Scriptures are as far from being ascetic in their outlook as are those of the Hebrews—perhaps rather farther than the New Testament. The commendation of celibacy, fasting, poverty, and monachism so familiar in Oriental religions is not met with in the Avesta. In fact the Avestan view of life may be compared at this point with that of Calvinism. It is not world-denying but world-affirming. Life is not a passive retreat but an active calling. Tilling the soil is itself a religious act:

[7] Yasht 10:2; Moulton, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

> O maker of the material world, thou Holy One! Who is the fourth that rejoiceth the Earth with greatest joy? Ahura Mazda answered: "It is he who cultivates most corn, grass, and fruit, O Spitama Zarathustra! who waters ground that is dry, or dries ground that is too wet. . . ."
>
> O maker of the material world, thou Holy One! What is the food that fills the law of Mazda? Ahura Mazda answered: "It is growing corn again and again, O Spitama Zarathustra! He who sows corn sows holiness."[8]

It is not surprising that the Parsee community in Bombay—the largest existing group of Zoroastrians—is possessed of wealth, and enjoys prosperity and prestige, far out of proportion to its strength in numbers. (It is also famous for charity—to members of the group and for public benefactions. It is very exclusive, though Zarathustra himself had the missionary spirit.)

In closing the chapter I shall not attempt any detailed balancing of pros and cons. The Avesta as a whole is a rather monotonous and excessively priest-ridden Bible. It has no succession of prophets and it has not been conspicuously successful in the nourishing of saints. Yet one of the great religious innovators of the ancient world speaks through its pages; it stands with the Bible of Jews and Christians in maintaining at the same time

[8] Vendidad 3:23, 30f.; *SBE* IV, 28f.

the stern reality of Evil and the assured triumph of the Good; and it holds as few Scriptures have to a positive, affirmative, aggressive attitude toward life. The Gathas in particular deserve rank among humanity's most valuable literary survivals from early times.

The two specimens of the Gathas appended below will give an idea of their character. The rendering into English verse is by J. H. Moulton:

1. This I ask thee—tell me truly, tell me duly, Holy Lord—
   How to worship with a service worthy thee, O King adored.
   Teach me, Wise One, as the heavenly may the earthly, as to friend
   Friend may speak—so may the kindly Right his timely succor bring,
   And with heaven's Good Thought to usward in his gracious power descend.

2. Tell me duly, tell me truly, as I pray, O Holy King—
   When the Highest Life is dawning, at thy Kingdom's opening,
   Shall the dooms of heaven's tribunal give to every man his due?
   Surely he, the holy prophet, to his watchful soul doth lay
   All men's sin, yet ever friendly doth the worlds of life renew.

3. This I ask thee—tell me truly, tell me duly as I pray:
   Who the Sire from whose begetting Right was on Creation Day?
   Who their several paths appointed where the Sun and Stars should go?

By whose power is yon moon waxing, by that power again to wane?
These things, Wisest, I am yearning, these and more beside to know.

4. This I ask thee, Lord of Wisdom—truly make the mystery plain:
Who this world, beneath, above us, safe from falling did sustain,
Nether Earth, and vault of Heaven? Who the Waters hath upborne,
Who the Plant-world? Who yoked swiftness to the clouds and to the wind?
Who is he, O Wise Creator, from whose soul Good Thought was born?

5. Tell me truly as I ask thee—Lord illuminate my mind:
Light and Darkness, who hath made them? who such wondrous skill could find?
Who the hours of sleep and waking hath ordained with wisest skill,
Dawn of day, and noon's refreshment, and the late approach of eve,
Set to call the man of knowledge hests of duty to fulfill?

* * * *

1. By his kind Spirit, by Best Thought and Deed
And Word, with Right, the Wise Lord gives his meed
Through Power and Piety—Weal and Life Indeed.

2. This kindliest Spirit's Best one doth fulfill
With tongue by Goodness' words, with hand by will
Of Piety's lore: Mazdah Right's sire is still.

3. Blest Father of the Spirit that hath made
Luck-bearing Cattle, and its peaceful glade
By the kind Mother, through the Good Thought's aid.

4. From this have fallen the Lovers of the Lie,
Not so the Right's men. Rich or poor, may I
To these show love, to those show enmity.

5. Thy promised Best, by this kind Spirit due
To men of Right—Lord, is't thy will a crew
Of Liars enjoy it, Ill Thought's comrades true?

6. Through this kind Spirit, Lord, and by thy Fire,
With Right and Piety, thou giv'st both their hire.
Sure this shall turn all who the truth desire! [9]

[9] Yasna 44:1-5, 47; Moulton, *op. cit.*, pp. 50f.

CHAPTER XV

THE TRIPITAKA (BUDDHIST)

THE Tripitaka, like the Avesta, is to be classed among the Bibles which owe their origin to the work of a great religious personality. It contains nothing that is directly from Gautama, but the teaching of the earlier suttas may be trusted as substantially his, and there are also valuable reminiscences of his life. He is a clearer historical figure than Zoroaster—approximately as clear as Jesus.

Gautama was probably born about 560 B.C. and died some eighty years later. The political organization of northern India at the time was comparable with that of Greece in the time of Socrates. There were numerous clans, organized as petty states. Most of these were republics, with the aristocrats mainly in power. Gautama's father was an aristocrat—one of the chieftains in control of a clan settled in the plain of the upper Ganges and northward on the slopes of the Himalayas. Part of the territory is now in Nepal, the rest in British India. No doubt the boy's education would include something of the Vedic lore, but

more attention would be given to martial exercises and as a scion of the nobility his respect for the Brahman priests would be mingled with distrust and contempt.

One of the familiar sights of his childhood would be that of the self-torturing ascetics, common in India then as now. Indeed there was evidence of human misery all about him, and the young nobleman could not shut his eyes to it. In spite of the life of luxury which he lived sorrow without and disillusionment within kept obtruding themselves. In due time he was married, and at the age of twenty-nine a son was born to him. Soon thereafter he suddenly left home and family and went forth in search of salvation, a penniless wanderer. There was nothing unusual about this. Many others were doing it. But this young man differed from the others in that there was in him the making of a great seer and physician of the soul. Naturally he tried first the ascetic way, practicing self-torture and fasting until he almost killed himself. But six years of this brought no satisfactory results: it was "like time spent endeavoring to tie the air into knots."[1] So he began taking a normal amount of food, and built up his health and strength again. He was tempted to return home and take up the old life once more, but he did not yield.

Seven years after the Great Renunciation (leaving his

[1] Jataka 1, 67; see Geden, *op. cit.*, p. 443.

home) occurred the experience under the Bo-Tree—the Enlightenment, the attainment of Buddhahood. At last he had found peace, had learned the solution of life's riddle. What should he do with this hard-won possession? The most natural answer was to meditate upon it, think through its implications, spending his remaining years in retirement from the world. But such was not Gautama's final answer: this temptation too he overcame. The life which he chose—and followed for nearly half a century—was that of a traveling teacher: a life of humble service and helpfulness.

In the dry season he and his disciples wandered here and there among the villages and towns of the Ganges valley, their greatest range being some two hundred and fifty miles from Benares. For the rainy months they maintained headquarters in palm groves, where huts were built for them and where the teacher talked with his followers. The sacred books have numerous stories of conversions to the Buddha's teachings, as well as records of his kindly deeds. Among the early adherents were members of his own family, and a cousin, Ananda, became the most intimate of all his disciples. Some of the converts were men of rank and learning, including members of the Brahman caste. The regular procedure was for the convert to abandon his vocation and family and become a mendicant. Some contented

themselves with the position of lay disciples, yet from the first Buddhism had distinctly the aspect of a monastic movement. At Gautama's death his followers were already well organized as an order of monks, and there was a corresponding order of nuns. For the latter, it must be aded, the founder had small enthusiasm. He deeply distrusted women.

Just what was the solution of life's problem that Gautama had discovered and felt moved to impart to suffering humanity? The answer to that question is to be found both in the Sutta-pitaka and in the Vinaya-pitaka, and there is little reason for doubting that it is in substance the answer which the great teacher himself gave to his earliest disciples. The gist of it is contained in the following passage, from his "first sermon" after the Enlightenment:

> And the Blessed One thus addressed the five Bhikkhus [mendicants]: There are two extremes, O Bhikkhus, which he who has given up the world ought to avoid. What are these two extremes? A life given to pleasures, devoted to pleasures and lusts: this is degrading, sensual, vulgar, ignoble, and profitless; and a life given to mortifications: this is painful, ignoble, and profitless. By avoiding these two extremes, O Bhikkhus, the Tathagata [Gautama] has gained the knowledge of the Middle Path which leads to insight, which leads to

wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to the Sambodhi, to Nirvana.

Which, O Bhikkhus, is this Middle Path the knowledge of which the Tathagata has gained, which leads to insight, which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to the Sambodhi, to Nirvana? It is the holy eightfold Path, namely, Right Belief, Righ Aspiration, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Means of Livelihood, Right Endeavor, Right Memory [Mindfulness], Right Meditation [Rapture]. This, O Bhikkhus, is the Middle Path the knowledge of which the Tathagata has gained. . . .

This, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of Suffering: Birth is suffering; decay is suffering; illness is suffering; death is suffering. Presence of objects we hate is suffering; separation from objects we love is suffering; not to obtain what we desire is suffering. Briefly, the fivefold clinging to existence is suffering.

This, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering: Thirst, that leads to rebirth, accompanied by pleasure and lust, finding its delight here and there. (This thirst is threefold), namely, thirst for pleasure, thirst for existence [of a future life], thirst for prosperity.

This, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering: (it ceases with) the complete cessation of this thirst,—a cessation which

> consists in the absence of every passion,—with the abandoning of this thirst, with the doing away with it, with the deliverance from it, with the destruction of desire.[3]

This quite evidently proceeds from a background of thought which is different from that of the Western world in the twentieth century, yet its general purport is not hard for us to grasp. It is clear, for one thing, that the great concern is to get rid of suffering, and that not in a future life but here and now. Gautama had first learned how *not* to accomplish this end: the way of dissipation and the way of self-torture were alike to be avoided; and this was the first lesson which he passed on to his followers.

On the positive side, we see at once that the Eightfold Path into which the Middle Path revolves itself is strongly ethical. Whatever else it may mean it evidently means that he who would follow it must lead a good life: good in relation to others as well as to self; good in thought, word, and deed. And it is noteworthy that under the head of Right Conduct *love* is given a place of prime importance:

> All the means that can be used as bases for doing right are not worth the sixteenth part of the emancipation of the heart through love. That takes all those up into itself, outshining them in

[3] Mahavagga i, 6, 1721; *SBE* XIII, 94f.

> radiance and glory. Just as whatsoever stars there be, their radiance avails not the sixteenth part of the radiance of the moon. That takes all those up into itself, outshining them in radiance and glory—just as in the last month of the rains, at harvest time, the sun, mounting up on high into the clear and cloudless sky, overwhelms all darkness in the realms of space and shines forth in radiance and glory—just so all the means that can be used as helps toward doing right avail not the sixteenth part of the emancipation of the heart through love.[8]

The Path is also mystical. Right Rapture is the final stage, and the sacred books have much to say of it. This could scarcely have been otherwise in view of the importance attached to ecstatic meditation in India from the period of the Vedas to our own time. The cultivation of states of mystical absorption was made a part of the training of the Buddhist monks, but it was not deemed the most important thing. To seek salvation through this means alone was considered a heresy. In short the Buddhism of the Tripitaka, as compared with other Eastern religions, has only a moderate mystical emphasis.

The Path ends in Right Rapture but it begins in Right Belief, and this beginning is all-important. What

[8] Iti-vuttaka, pp. 19-21; quoted by T. W. Rhys Davids, *EB* IV, 744.

Gautama had won was primarily a knowledge—an understanding of things fundamental to successful living. Those whom he taught were not capable of gaining this essential knowledge for themselves as he had gained it, but they could receive it from him—could *believe* it—and this they must do if they would be his followers. It was not altogether a simple thing, this knowledge, yet one thing in it was immeasurably more important than all the rest: the truth of *impermanence*, of *becoming* as over against being, which reached its climax in the *no-soul* doctrine.

The idea that the uinverse is to be described in terms of becoming rather than being—that life is all a flux—is not peculiar to Buddhism. It was held by the Greek Heraclitus, who lived just a little later than Gautama, and it has its modern counterpart in evolutionary science. But seldom elsewhere has it "been worked out in the same uncompromising way. Both in Europe, and in all Indian thought except the Buddhist, souls, and the gods who are made in imitation of souls, are considered as exceptions."[4] The Buddhism of the Tripitaka makes no exceptions. The first in the collection of *Dialogues of Gautama* in the Sutta-pitaka discusses and categorically rejects all the current theories about "souls," and the argument reappears in one form or another elsewhere in the canon. In the Milinda-

[4] Rhys Davids, *op. cit.*, IV, 743.

panha it is one of the favorite subjects on which the sage Nagasena discourses to the Greek king Menander.

From the Buddhist point of view enormous practical gain comes from this revolutionary doctrine. He who makes it his own is freed, on the one hand, from the fearful weight of superstitious fears imposed by the popular animism. Since there are no souls there are of course no spirits, bad or good, and the life of the uncultured man is relieved of one of its most intolerable burdens. On the other hand, it is equally effective against the meaningless mummeries of the priestly sacrifices and the mazes of speculation in which the philosophers involve themselves; for the gods with whom the priests try to establish contact are as much a part of the great flux as we are, while the "ego" with whose nature and destiny the philosophers are concerned does not exist. The problem of living is given a sounder and simpler starting point.

In line with all this is the Buddhist emphasis on the law of Cause and Effect—the Karma idea taken over from Brahamism. "As a man soweth so shall he also reap." The individual's salvation is to be found through understanding and keeping in harmony with the eternal scheme of things.

Such is the heart—or perhaps we should rather say the root—of the religion of the Tripitaka. Its right to be called a religion at all has often been called in ques-

tion. It is practically atheistic—not denying the existence of gods but assigning an unimportant place to them—and it tells man bluntly that no one can save him but himself. "Be your own lamps," said the Buddha,—"yourselves your refuge."[5] His last words to his disciples are said to have been: "Now, O monks, I take my leave of you. All things are composite and all are transient; work with diligence for the goal of freedom."[6] Yet on two grounds at least the outlook on life which we find in these Buddhist Scriptures may fairly be called religious.

In the first place they are far from being emotionally cold, even in some parts where the intellectual attitude seems most dominant. If the Buddha and his followers did not have a religion they had something that served as a fair substitute—indeed something that seemed to them far better than the religion of those about them. They saw unity in all existence: gods, man, animals, inanimate things, all were involved in one movement, one process; and undoubtedly to feel oneself a part of such a cosmic process may stir the emotions, may yield an attitude essentially religious. "In that manifold complex subtle ties linked him could he but discern them—with the Teachers of past ages, Buddhas who had

[5] See J. Estlin Carpenter, *Buddhism and Christianity* (London, Hodder, 1923), pp. 234f.

[6] See Kenneth J. Saunders, *Gautama Buddha: A Biography* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1922), p. 79. *Cf.* Rhys Davids, *op. cit.*, IV, 742.

gone before, and the saints who had followed them, working for the same deliverance."[7] One is reminded of Stoicism, which for all its intellectual self-sufficiency had plenty of warmth for those who were capable of sharing its outlook. The following bits of verse from the Sutta-pitaka, translated by Kenneth J. Saunders, speak eloquently of the attitude engendered by the teachings of Gautama:

> Blest is the lesson my teacher has taught!
> I live in the village, but ever in thought
> I escape to the jungle: no fetters for me,
> For wisdom has set me most gloriously free.[8]
>
> * * * *
>
> Alone dwell I in dreadful cave,
> The rain pours gurgling ceaselessly:
> These things for me no terrors have;
> Heeding them not, my mind is free.[9]

Yet it must be admitted that this could scarcely be a religion for the rank and file, even in the Orient; and this brings us to the second consideration. Buddhism as it exists to-day has traveled far from Gautama, and already in the Tripitaka it has taken on some characteristics which make it more typically a religion—for better or for worse. Above all this applies to the

[7] *Carpenter, op. cit.*, p. 237.
[8] Theragatha 14.
[9] *Ibid.*, 189. See Kenneth J. Saunders, *The Heart of Buddhism* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1915), p. 40.

exaltation of the person of the Buddha himself. He is seen as not only sinless but omniscient. He knows of his own life in previous incarnations, and he knows what those about him are speaking before they speak their thoughts. Miracles, ranging all the way from the bizarre to the stupendous, are attributed to him. In a passage which has many parallels he is called "the Holy One, the Perfect in Knowledge and in Conduct, the Auspicious, the Knower of all the worlds, the Incomparable Trainer of men that wish to be trained, the Teacher of gods and men, the Awakened One, the Holy One."[10] In short Gautama is coming to have a place in Buddhism similar to the place which Jesus was later to have in Christianity. If we may not speak of the process as a deification it is only because in the thought of his followers the category of *god* is not high enough for him. No doubt such a conception of the great sage seems to us both untrue and unfortunate, but in any case it contributed much toward making a religion of what had been a teaching—a religion which went forth conquering and to conquer.

In this religion of the Buddhist canonical Scriptures there is obvious strength and obvious weakness. The Eightfold Path sets forth a high ideal of living, the emphasis on becoming as opposed to being is at any

[10] *Discourses of Gotama Buddha,* tr. by Silacara, II, 152f.; quoted by Saunders in *Gautama Buddha: A Biography,* p. 84.

rate more in harmony with our scientific outlook of to-day than are the static conceptions of most other Scriptures, while the effort to build life on a foundation free from extreme asceticism, elaborate ritual, metaphysical speculation, and popular superstition is surely worthy of our interest and sympathy. Yet it has not been a conspicuously successful effort, and some of the reasons for its want of success may be surmised.

In spite of Gautama's distaste for it, speculation about the deep questions of human origins and destiny soon found its way into Buddhism, and the fact is significant. George Foot Moore remarks that "agnosticism, though it clothe itself with the mantle of religious earnestness, is not a permanent resting-place for thoughtful minds."[11] Nor is atheism, even in its most appealing guise, a permanent resting-place for the soul of the ordinary man. That we must work out our own salvation is a truth that has been sufficiently verified; yet there is good ground for believing that it is not the whole truth, and in one fashion or another men persist in associating with it the other proposition that "it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." [12]

And if the agnosticism and the atheism have been weaknesses the asceticism has been not less so. For

[11] *History of Religions* (N.Y., Scribner, 1914), I, 306.
[12] Phil. 2:12f.

notwithstanding its recommendation of the "middle" path the Tripitaka is an ascetic Scripture. The body is not to be starved or tortured but it is to be *despised.* Desires associated with it—indeed with the whole notion of an individual ego—are to be suppressed. The outlook is not less monkish than that of the Vedas is priestly, and the resulting one-sidedness is scarcely less unfortunate. Even if we grant that craving for pleasures of the senses, for present prosperity, and for continued existence is the great root of suffering and the great enemy of true happiness, it does not follow that the whole problem is to be solved by getting rid of all such craving. The method is too negative. Gautama's teaching would have been the better if he had given a place to the "sublimation" idea—not to mention his need of a better balanced view of the evil of desire.

The Tripitaka and the Jewish-Christian Bible have important resemblances. In particular, the ethical teachings show striking parallels, while the place of Gautama in the Buddhist Bible is comparable at many points with the place of Jesus in the New Testament. Other resemblances, such as that between the Buddhist "Nirvana" and the Christian "Kingdom of Heaven within you," have greater or less significance.

The outstanding differences I think are two: (1) The ethic of the Buddhist Bible—which is to say its

whole attitude toward practical living—is atheistic, while that of the Old and New Testaments is strongly theistic; (2) The Tripitaka sets forth a way of life which admittedly can be followed in its entirety only by withdrawal from family associations and the work of the world; the Jewish-Christian Bible has in view a life *in,* though not wholly *of,* the world.

As to this latter point, I am aware that Jesus bade some to leave all and follow him, also that his way of life has never been very successfully followed in the world of affairs. It is no doubt true that Jesus as well as Gautama had in view, as the field in which his ideals were to operate, an order different from that of the world about him or the world about us. This is important, but our comparison is of the two Bibles rather than of the two teachers and here it does not loom so large. The ideal of withdrawal from the world dominates the Tripitaka; there is very little of it in the Jewish-Christian Bible. This, for our present purpose, is the important point.

The followers of Jesus lived in the present order, expecting an ideal order soon to be ushered in. The followers of Gautama, not having this expectation, undertook to found the ideal order for themselves. The pity is that they could not have founded it on sounder principles, such as might have made possible the ultimate inclusion and remaking of the world. Their

attitude of withdrawal from their fellows and suppression of desire has to an unfortunate extent made their principles of love and compassion ineffective. Love becomes an abstract and intellectual thing instead of the great motive force for active life. This is regrettable, but we do well to remember that activity, no less than passivity, may prove inimical to love.

I shall append to the chapter a few selected verses from the Dhammapada, a book of the Sutta-pitaka which deserves high rank among humanity's treasure-stores of ethical maxims and reflections:

> All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.
>
> Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by love, this is an old rule.
>
> They who imagine truth in untruth, and see untruth in truth, never arrive at truth, but follow vain desires.
>
> If one man conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men, and if another conquer himself, he is the greatest of conquerers.
>
> A man is not learned because he talks much; he who is patient, free from hatred and fear, he is called learned.

A man is not an elder because his head is grey; his age may be ripe, but he is called "Old-in-vain."

If a man find a prudent companion who walks with him, is wise, and lives soberly, he may walk with him, overcoming all dangers, happy, but considerate. If a man find no prudent companion who walks with him, is wise, and lives soberly, let him walk alone, like a king who has left his conquered country behind,—like an elephant in the forest.[18]

NOTE: I am indebted to Professor Haydon for the following comments on matters touched upon in this chapter: "In dealing with the so-called atheism of Buddhism you seem to imply that religion= theology. You do not mean that surely. Men may have a world-view and a cosmic synthesis without having God or gods—and this lack of a god should not, by sheer definition, exclude them from 'religions.' There are many non-theistic religions. One cannot assume a priori that theism is the final way. [I quite agree] . . . If you remember that men followed this religion as a quest of the complete and perfect existence there seems to be no more reason in it than in Christianity to discredit their 'love' and 'compassion.' They say of Christianity that it is the religion preaching love but practicing war and competition and hatred."

[18] Dhammapada, verses 2, 5, 11, 103, 258, 260, 328f.; *SBE* X, 3ff.

CHAPTER XVI

THE KING AND SHU (CONFUCIAN)

K'UNG FU-TZE, whose name is known to the Western world in the Latinized form Confucius, lived in China in the sixth and the fifth centuries B.C.—at the same time that Gautama was living in India. The reigning dynasty was weak, and the country was ruled—or misruled—in loose feudal fashion. One of the many petty states was that of Lu, in the present province of Shantung. Here Confucius was born and here the greater part of his life was spent. His father, a military officer of noble lineage, had died when he was young and he was dependent on his own resources. He followed the occupations of teacher, administrator in municipal and state offices, wandering philosopher, and student of literature. Above all he devoted himself to the cause of good government, than which no other cause was more needy in his time; but he was not very successful in having his ideas adopted while he lived. He died in 478 B.C. at the age of seventy-three.

There is a fairly close analogy between the relation of Confucius to the classical writings of Confucianism and the relation of Jesus to the combined Jewish-

Christian Scriptures. With the possible exception of one small book, the Ch'un Ch'iu, no part of the King and Shu was written by Confucius. Extensive parts were in existence long before his time. This applies to most of the Book of History, the Book of Poetry, and the Book of Divination, which together may be called the Confucian Old Testament. The earliest of the documents in the Book of History may go back beyond 2000 B.C., while the Book of Divination is said to date back to the twelfth century B.C. The three hundred and five pieces in the Book of Poetry are of varying age, but all are older than the time of Confucius, to whom Chinese tradition gives credit for the compiling of the anthology.

The remaining books date from after the time of Confucius and owe their origin mainly to disciples, or disciples of disciples, of the sage. They constitute a sort of Confucian New Testament, the Lun-Yu being comparable with the Christian Gospels and the Li-Ki and Meng-tze with the Epistles.

But this analogy with the Jewish-Christian Bible is not to be pressed. The distinction which I have made between the pre-Confucian and the post-Confucian books is not made in Chinese editions, though it coincides in part with the division between King and Shu, and certainly nothing was farther from the thought of the great sage himself than the giving of a new revela-

tion or ushering in of a new order. He was not much concerned with religion, in the stricter sense, and the heart of his message was loyalty to the past.

Perhaps the most striking peculiarity of the King and Shu, as compared with other Scriptures, is the dominance of the political interest—the concern with affairs of state, especially with the position and duties of rulers and their subordinate officers. Even the Hebrew Bible, strongly influenced as it is by the theocratic ideal, does not furnish a complete parallel. There the priesthood, at any rate, is distinct from the ruling class and plays an important independent rôle. In the Confucian books there is no priesthood: to perform the public sacrifices is a function of the ruler. Yet it is not to be assumed that this preoccupation with statecraft involves callousness toward the position and needs of the masses. Such is not the case. The point of view is rather that good government is the key to the whole problem of human needs: that a good ruler will choose good ministers, and that good ruler and good ministers together will insure a prosperous and happy people. The following will serve as an illustration:

> Examining into antiquity (we find that) Kao-yao said, "If (the sovereign) sincerely pursues the course of his virtue, the counsels (offered to him) will be intelligent, and the aids (of admonition that he receives) will be harmonious." . . . "Let

him be careful about his personal cultivation, with thoughts that are far-reaching, and thus he will produce a generous kindness and nice observance of distinctions among the nine branches of his kindred. All the intelligent (also) will exert themselves in his service; and in this way from what is near he will reach to what is distant." . . . Yü said, . . . "When (the sovereign) knows men, he is wise, and can put everyone into the office for which he is fit. When he gives repose to the people, his kindness is felt, and the black-haired race cherish him in their hearts."[1]

In such passages the Chinese writers are trying to exert an influence essentially similar to that which the Hebrew prophets Isaiah and Micah try to exert. The effort in both cases is to improve the general welfare by improving the government. The difference is that in the Chinese books sages speak, not reforming prophets: the tone is more calm, the outlook more intellectual. Such is ever the tone and outlook of Confucius himself, as the books report him. He is a philosopher and statesman, never a revolutionist.

Related to the political interest is the central place given to the matter of family relationships, which are regarded as in the strictest and fullest sense the bulwarks of society. They are the roots from which spring *order*

[1] Shu-King 3:2:1; *SBE* III, 53f.

and *propriety,* without which, from the Chinese point of view, nothing can be as it ought to be. In the Li-Ki it is said that there are ten things the rightness of which is instinctively known to men. They are

> Kindness on the part of the father, and filial duty on that of the son; gentleness on the part of the elder brother, and obedience on that of the younger; righteousness on the part of the husband, and submission on that of the wife; kindness on the part of the elders, and deference on that of juniors; with benevolence on the part of the ruler, and loyalty on that of the minister.[3]

Reciprocal obligations are similarly enjoined in several passages in the New Testament,[3] but the Jewish-Christian Bible nowhere makes the family relationship fundamental to the whole scheme of things as do the Confucian books. There is a fine saying attributed to Confucius that "From the loving example of one family a whole state may become loving, and from its courtesies, courteous."[4] In a charge to a newly appointed officer one of the ancient kings speaks of the punishment to be meted out to great criminals, and adds,

> . . . how much more (detestable) are the unfilial and unbrotherly!—as the son who does not rever-

[3] Li-Ki 7:2:19; *SBE* XXVII, 379f.
[3] See e.g. Col. 3:18ff.; Eph. 5:22ff.
[4] Li-Ki 39:18; *SBE* XXVIII, 417f.

ently discharge his duty to his father, but greatly wounds his father's heart, and the father who can (no longer) love his son, but hates him; as the younger brother who does not think of the manifest will of Heaven, and refuses to respect his elder brother, and the elder brother who does not think of the toil of their parents in bringing up their children, and is very unfriendly to his junior. If we who are charged with government do not treat parties who proceed to such wickedness as offenders, the laws (of our nature) given by Heaven to our people will be thrown into great discord and destroyed.[5]

And as good government is based on right family relationships so these relationships themselves have their root in the one obligation of reverence for parents and ancestors—"filial piety." Confucius himself is said to have illustrated the matter thus:

Anciently, under the government of the intelligent kings of the three dynasties, it was required of a man to show respect to his wife and son. When the path (of right government) was pursued, the wife was the hostess of the (deceased) parents;—could any husband dare not to show her respect? The superior man's respect is universal. Wherein it appears the greatest is in his respect for himself. He is in his person a branch

[5] Shu-King 5:9:3; *SBE* III, 169.

> from his parents;—can any son but have this self-respect? If he is not able to respect his own person, he is wounding his parents. If he wound his parents, he is wounding his own root; and when the root is wounded, the branches will follow it in its dying. These three things are an image of what is true with the whole people (in the body politic). One's own person reaches to the persons of others; one's own son to the sons of others; one's own wife to the wives of others. If a ruler do these things, the spirit of his conduct will reach to all under the sky. If the course of the great king be thus, all the states and families will be docilely obedient.[6]

A different development of the same idea may be seen in the opening chapter of the Book of Filial Piety (Hsiao-King):

> The Master said, "Shan, the ancient kings had a perfect virtue and all-embracing rule of conduct, through which they were in accord with all under heaven. By the practice of it the people were brought to live in peace and harmony, and there was no ill-will between superiors and inferiors. . . . (It was filial piety.) Now filial piety is the root of (all) virtue, and (the stem) out of which grows (all moral) teaching. . . . Our bodies—to every hair and bit of skin—are received by us

[6] Li-Ki 24:12; *SBE* XXVIII, 266.

> from our parents, and we must not presume to injure or wound them:—this is the beginning of filial piety. When we have established our character by the practice of the (filial) course, so as to make our name famous in future ages and thereby glorify our parents:—this is the end of filial piety. It commences with the service of parents; it proceeds to the service of the ruler; it is completed by the establishment of the character.[7]

There is both truth and beauty in this idea, met with so often in the Confucian books. But to the outsider it is likely to seem that the foundation is scarcely able to support the edifice. The relationship of members of a family to each other is undoubtedly a matter of social significance, but is it as significant as Confucianism would have us believe? No doubt the relation which a child bears to his parent is in a sense a fundamental relation, but is it fundamental in the far-reaching Confucian sense? May we not venture to think that the New Testament gives better expression to what is true in the idea when it inculcates loyalty to a *heavenly* Father? For the basis of such a loyalty is spiritual and moral, not merely a physical relationship beyond our choice. So for example in Jesus' exhortation to be true sons of the Father who makes His sun to rise upon the

[7] *SBE* III, 465-467.

evil and the good,[8] or in Paul's reminder to his Galatian converts that they are sons of God and should act in a manner worthy of that high privilege.[9]

That the ethical interest looms large in these Chinese classics has already been made clear. Every quotation thus far given testifies to it, and the number might be increased indefinitely. It is a practical, world-accepting ethic, like that of the Jewish Bible—non-ascetic and non-speculative. No other body of Scripture is richer in useful maxims on the underlying principles of good living. I can give space to only a few, selected at random. Except as otherwise stated they are credited to Confucius:

> A man should say, I am not concerned that I have no place, I am concerned how I may fit myself for one. I am not concerned that I am not known, I seek to be worthy to be known.[10]
>
> The mind of the superior man is conversant with righteousness; the mind of the mean man is conversant with gain.[11]
>
> The superior man is catholic and no partisan. The mean man is a partisan and not catholic.[12]
>
> The superior man, rather than have his emoluments superior to his worth, will have his worth superior to his emoluments.[13]

[8] Matt. 5:43-48.
[9] Gal. 3:26ff.
[10] Lun-Yu 4:14.
[11] Lun-Yu 4:16.
[12] Lun-Yu 2:14.
[13] Li-Ki 27:7.

Is not the superior man characterized by a perfect sincerity?[14]

In the Book of Poetry are three hundred pieces, but the design of them all may be embraced in one sentence—"Have no depraved thoughts." [15]

Yen, shall I teach you what knowledge is? When you know a thing, to hold that you know it; and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it;—this is knowledge.[16]

Learning without thought is labor lost; thought without learning is perilous.[17]

Wisdom, benevolence, and fortitude: these three are the universal virtues of all.[18]

To see what is right and not to do it is want of courage.[19]

Love and respect lie at the foundation of government.[20]

Fidelity to one's self and the corresponding reciprocity are not far from the Path. What you do not like when done to yourself, do not do to others.[21]

It is not Heaven that cuts short men's lives; they bring them to an end themselves. Some men who have not complied with virtue will yet not acknowledge their offences, and when Heaven has by evident tokens charged them to correct their

[14] Li-Ki 28:1:35.
[15] Lun-Yu 2:2.
[16] Lun-Yu 2:17.
[17] Lun-Yu 2:15.
[18] Li-Ki 28:2:9.
[19] Lun-Yu 2:24.
[20] Li-Ki 24:9.
[21] Li-Ki 28:1:32.

> conduct, they still say, "What are these things to us?" [Attributed to one of the ancient sages.][22]
>
> Affability combined with dignity; mildness combined with firmness; bluntness combined with respectfulness; aptness for government combined with reverent caution; docility combined with boldness; straightforwardness combined with gentleness; an easy negligence combined with discrimination; boldness combined with sincerity; and valor with righteousness. [The "nine virtues," attributed to Kao-yao.][23]

There can be no question but that a literature which abounds in this sort of wisdom is capable of providing good food for the souls of men. Yet the ethical outlook of these books has certain peculiarities which may fairly be thought of as limitations. I shall call attention to two: the concern with *ceremony* and the extreme *conservatism.* The two are closely related.

Ceremony is ubiquitous, and in several passages its value is explained and defended at length. I shall quote a part of one:

> . . . Those ceremonies prevent the rise of disorder and confusion, and are like the embankments which prevent the overflow of water. He who thinks the old embankments useless and de-

[22] Shu-King 4:9. [23] Shu-King 2:3:2.

stroys them is sure to suffer from the desolation caused by overflowing water; and he who should consider the old rules of propriety useless and abolish them would be sure to suffer from the calamities of disorder.

Thus if the ceremonies of marriage were discontinued, the path of husband and wife would be embittered, and there would be many offences of licentiousness and depravity. If the drinking ceremonies at country feasts were discontinued, the order between old and young would be neglected, and quarrelsome litigations would be numerous. If the ceremonies of mourning and sacrifice were discontinued, the kindly feeling of officers and sons would become small; there would be numerous cases in which there was a revolt from the observances due to the dead, and an oblivion of (those due) to the living. If the ceremonies of friendly messages and court attendances were discontinued, the positions of ruler and subject would fall into disuse, the conduct of the feudal princes would be evil, and the ruin wrought by rebellion, encroachment, and oppression would ensue.

Therefore the instructive and transforming power of ceremonies is subtle; they stop depravity before it has taken form, causing men daily to move toward what is good, and keep themselves farther apart from guilt, without being themselves conscious of it. It was on this account that

the ancient kings set so high a value upon them.[24]

This is an impressive apologetic, though to the non-Chinese mind it will almost certainly seem to claim too much—to overshoot the mark. One gets the impression that even the writer himself—living in the China of long centuries ago—was conscious of defending something that was difficult to defend. Yet when allowance is made for overemphasis there is something lofty and admirable in this point of view. Even the impatient Occidental can scarcely fail to be impressed by the simple phrase—occurring often in the Confucian books—"Be reverential."

Confucius stands as the great apostle of conservatism. No saying is more characteristic of him than that reported in the Analects, "The cautious seldom err." [25] Of the same order is the saying that "The study of strange doctrines is injurious indeed," [26] and the statement that "When one gives few occasions for blame in his words, and few occasions for repentance in his conduct, he is in the way to get emolument." [27] It is reported that "The Master's frequent themes of discourse were—the Odes, the History, and the maintenance of the Rules of Propriety" [28]—in short, what seemed to him best in the heritage of literature and cus-

[24] Li-Ki 23:7-9; *SBE* XXVIII, 259f.
[25] Lun-Yu 4:23.
[26] Lun-Yu 2:16.
[27] Lun-Yu 2:18.
[28] Lun-Yu 7:17.

tom received from the past. It was upon this that he focused attention: through loyalty to this he believed that China would be peaceful, happy, great.

Jesus also was respectful toward inherited values, in a true sense conservative. But it is far from being true of him, as of Confucius, that conservatism was the mainspring of his attitudes and actions. A recent writer on Christianity has said:

> Plato concerns himself mainly with safeguards, and Jesus wholly with venture . . . the real challenge of the cross is the high venture of living in a world not realized. It is this that distinguishes Christianity from all other historical forms of religion. . . .[29]

Confucius and the Confucian books, even more than Plato, are concerned with safeguards. Herein lies their strength. Humanity still needs to be told to be cautious, to avoid occasions of repentance, to give heed to the past, to be reverent. Yet we have passed, or are rapidly passing, out of a static conception of the world and of life, and the kind of leadership which we need is profoundly affected by this fact. There is reason for believing that even China, in the coming day, will find more adequate guidance and inspiration in the New Testament than in the Confucian classics.

[29] J. W. Oman, article "Christianity" in *EB*, new volumes (13th ed.).

It remains that a word be said about the *religion* of these books, in distinction from their ethics. In the Book of History and the Book of Poetry—representing the older outlook—there are many references to God (or Heaven), who is thought of very much as in the narrative books of the Jewish Bible: a transcendant sovereign demanding and enforcing righteousness, and especially concerned with the conduct of the nation's rulers. To this Supreme Ruler reverence and worship are due. Sacrifice is also offered to subordinate spirits, especially the spirits of the great rivers and mountains, and to decreased ancestors. But there is no order of priests. At the household sacrifices the head of the family officiates, and at the state sacrifices the king. Much is made of divination, in the Yi-King and elsewhere. Warmth of personal religious feeling, such as we meet with in the Hebrew Psalms, is lacking.

In the later books, belonging to the time of Confucius and after, there is less interest in the supermundane. The recorded teachings of the sage himself are "singularly devoid of reference to anything but what was seen and temporal." [80] Rarely does he approach even as near to religious enthusiasm as in the following passage:

[80] James Legge, in *EB* VI, 912.

The Master said, How abundant and rich are the powers possessed and exercised by Spiritual Beings! We look for them, but do not see them; we listen for, but do not hear them; they enter into all things, and nothing is without them. They cause all under Heaven to fast and purify themselves, and to array themselves in their richest dresses in order to attend at their sacrifices. Then, like overflowing water, they seem to be over the heads, and on the left and right (of their worshipers). It is said in the Book of Poetry,

"The Spirits come, but when and where,
No one beforehand can declare.
The more should we not Spirits slight,
But ever feel as in their sight." [81]

This attitude toward religion and its observances is that of an intelligent and sympathetic outsider rather than of one for whom the things of the spirit have personal reality.

The King and Shu are often omitted from lists of the Bibes of mankind, for the reason that they neither claimed nor are held to be divine revelations. Yet from the standpoint of the reverence which they have inspired and the influence which they have exerted they are abundantly deserving of a place among the great Scriptures. "Hundreds of thousands of the literati

[81] Li-Ki 28:1:44-46; *SBE* XXVIII, 307f.

can repeat every sentence in the classical books; the masses of the people have scores of the Confucian maxims, and little else of an ethical nature, in their memories,—and with a beneficial result." So wrote James Legge, the veteran missionary and scholar, before the old regime in China had ended.[82] And however the situation may have changed with regard to the literati, the dependence of the masses on the Confucian maxims probably remains much the same. It is here—in the realm of practical philosophy—that these books have their great importance, and it is to be hoped and expected that their usefulness will continue for centuries yet to come.

Whether the lack of religious depth is deemed a serious defect will depend on the point of view. To quote again from Legge: "Where thought as well as action does not reach beyond the limits of earth and time, we do not find man in his best estate. We miss the graces and consolations of faith; we have human efforts and ambitions, but they are unimpregnated with divine impulses and heavenly aspirings." [83] This seems to me to be true. And in so far as it is true the Christian, while paying his tribute of respect and admiration to the King and Shu, may venture at the same time to commend to his Chinese friends the Old and New Testaments.

[82] *EB* VI, 912. [83] *Ibid.*, VI, 908.

CHAPTER XVII

THE KORAN (MOHAMMEDAN)

In most of the great Scriptures we meet with outstanding personalities, but in no other Bible is the personality of a single leader so completely dominant as is that of Mohammed in the Koran.

Mohammed died in the year 632 A.D., at about sixty-three years of age. He was born and lived his early life in the town of Mecca in Arabia, a place which had commercial importance on account of being at the meeting point of important caravan routes and religious importance as the site of the Ka'aba, a cube-shaped temple which was and still is the most sacred of Arabian shrines. As a youth he seems to have been in straitened circumstances, but thanks to his marriage to the wealthy Khadijah he found himself ere long in the position of an affluent trader. It is difficult to be certain as to just what influences were strongest in leading this Arab business man, in middle life, to launch out on the unpopular and hazardous career of a reforming prophet. It was visions, understood as divine revelations, which furnished the immediate occasion, but what was the background of the visions?

Perhaps the answer is to be found mainly in the fact that Judaism and Christianity—in corrupt form to be sure—had long made themselves felt in the peninsula. Much of the lore of these religions, Biblical and otherwise, had been learned by Mohammed and had made a deep impression on his mind. In particular he was impressed by the Jewish conception of one true God and of mighty men—such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Elijah—who in bygone centuries had battled for his cause against idolaters. Jesus also he thought of as in this great succession, and in connection with his ecstatic visions he came to think of himself as another prophet, or apostle—the last and greatest of the divinely appointed "warners." His native region was in a chaotic state both as to politics and religion—government being tribal and worship animistic and idolatrous—so that a field for reforming and unifying work was ready at his hand. And along with haphazard and often distorted information about their legends, history, and theology, he had taken over from Jews and Christians also the idea of a Book of divine origin through which God communicated His will to men. From this idea the Koran came into being, and began a career of influence in some respects surpassing that of any of its predecessors.

The following is a fairly typical example of the numerous warning passages:

By the mount! by the Book inscribed upon an outstretched vellum! by the frequented house! by the elevated roof! by the swelling sea! verily, the torment of thy Lord will come to pass;—there is none to avert it!

The day when the heavens shall reel about, and the mountains shall move about,—then woe upon that day to those who call (the apostles) liars, who plunge into discussion for a sport!

On the day when they shall be thrust away into the fire of hell,—"This is the fire, the which ye used to call a lie!—Is it magic, this? or can ye not see?—broil ye therein, and be patient thereof or be not patient, it is the same to you: ye are but rewarded for that which ye did do!"

Verily, the pious (shall be) in gardens and pleasure, enjoying what their Lord has given them; for their Lord will save them from the torment of hell.[1]

Less attention is usually given to heaven than to hell, but in some passages its delights are dwelt upon by way of contrast. For example:

The similitude of Paradise which is promised to the pious,—in it are rivers of water without corruption, and rivers of milk, the taste whereof changes not, and rivers of wine delicious to those

[1] Koran 52:1-18, tr. by E. H. Palmer in *SBE.* (The following translations are from the same source.)

> who drink; and rivers of honey clarified; and there shall they have all kinds of fruit and forgiveness from their Lord! (Is that) like him who dwells in the fire for aye? and who are given to drink boiling water that shall rend their bowels asunder? [3]

These descriptions of course reflect the joys and hardships, respectively, of desert life, just as the New Jerusalem of the New Testament book of Revelation has as its background the life of humble city dwellers in the Roman Empire.

To Mohammed it seemed that the dire punishments of hell which he depicted were abundantly merited by those who failed to understand and appreciate God's works of creation and providence:

> He created man from a clot; and yet, behold, he is an open opponent! The cattle, too, have We created for you; in them is warmth and profit, and from them do ye eat. In them is there beauty for you when ye drive them home to rest, and when ye drive them forth to graze. And they bear your heavy burdens to towns which ye could not otherwise reach, except with great wretchedness of soul;—verily your Lord is kind and merciful. And horses too, and mules, and asses, for you to ride upon and for an ornament.—

[3] 47:16f.

He creates also what ye know not of. God's it is to show the path; from it some turn aside: but had he pleased he would have guided you one and all.

He it is who sends down water from the sky, whence ye have drink, and whence the trees grow whereby ye feed your flocks. He makes the corn to grow, and the olives, and the palms, and the grapes, and some of every fruit;—verily, in that is a sign unto a people who reflect. And He subjected to you the night and the day, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars are subjected to His bidding. Verily, in that are signs to a people who have sense. And what he has produced for you in the earth varying in hue, verily, in that is a sign for a people who are mindful.

He it is who has subjected the sea, that ye may eat fresh flesh therefrom; and ye bring forth from it ornaments which ye wear, and thou mayest see the ships cleaving through it,—and that ye may search after His grace,—and haply ye may give thanks. And he has cast firm mountains on the earth lest it move with you; and rivers and roads; haply ye may be guided. And landmarks; and by the stars too are they guided.

Is He who creates like him who creates not?—are they then unmindful?[a]

[a] 16:4-17.

The point at which the prophet is driving in this fine poetic passage finds expression in the query, "Is He who creates like him who creates not?" Creation—wonderful, beautiful, beneficent—speaks plainly of one supreme creator God. For men in the face of this evidence to continue worshiping dumb idols, or subordinate spirits such as jinns or angels, or a prophetic messenger such as Jesus—this is the height of wilful folly:

> Let them bear the burden of their sins entirely on the resurrection day, and some of the burdens of those whom they led astray without knowledge. —Aye! an ill burden shall they bear.[4]

And to the sin of rejecting the testimony of nature and providence was added that of scorning the more direct witness of the heavenly Koran, which God, through the angel Gabriel as mediator and Mohammed as mouthpiece, was sending down to them in parts from time to time:

> God, there is no God but He, the living, the self-subsistent. He has sent down to thee the Book in truth, confirming what was before it, and has revealed the law, and the gospel before for the guidance of men, and has revealed the Discrimination. Verily, those who disbelieve in the

[4] 16:27.

> signs of God, for them is severe torment, for God is mighty and avenging.[5]

This claim, with warning attached, is often repeated, and evidence is not wanting as to the reactions of the hearers. The prophet is accused of being a soothsayer, a magician, a "poet," a madman, and—most of all, apparently—a liar. His revelations are said to be ambiguous, obsolete, "old folks' tales," forged, plagiarized, ineffective. Objection is made to them as not being delivered all at once, not in tangible written form, not in a foreign language, and not brought directly by an angel.[6] To all of which Mohammed's most telling rejoinder is, Who of you, whether men or jinn, can produce the like?[7] In spite of scorn and hostility he continues to put forth his admonitions as "a revelation from the Lord of the worlds,"[8] taking comfort meanwhile from the reflection that God's ambassadors before him had triumphed over like obstacles:

> How many prophets have We [God] sent amongst those of yore? and there never came to them a prophet but they did not mock at him; then We destroyed them—more valiant than these. . . .[9]

[5] 3:1-2.
[6] See Surahs 6, 9, 11, 17, 18, 20, 25, 41, 43, etc.
[7] See 10:39; 11:17; 17:90. [8] 69:43. [9] 43:5f.

Was the reformation which Mohammed was trying to promote wholly theological, or was it ethical as well? The uninitiated reader of the Koran certainly gets the impression at first that it was mainly theological: that men are consigned to heaven or hell because they believe and heed—or do not believe and heed—the prophet's proclamation about the nature of God; that the worship of idols, of spirits, and of Jesus is a sin because it is a sin, or at any rate for some other reason than because of any bad effect which it has on man's conduct or attitude toward his fellow-man. In a typical passage it is charged that

> they made the jinn partners with God, though He created them! and they ascribed to Him sons and daughters, though they have no knowledge; celebrated be His praise! and exalted be He above what they attribute to Him! The inventor of the heavens and the earth! how can He have a son, when He has no female companion, and when He has created everything, and everything He knows?[10]

This is theological, not to say doctrinaire. But though it is typical the reader, if he continues his reading, will by and by find that the ethical interest also is present. In a passage such as the following we

[10] 6:100.

have a blending of the theological, the ethical, and the eschatological:

> They who fulfill their vows, and fear a day, the evil which shall fly abroad, and who give food for His love to the poor and the orphan and the captive. "We only feed you for God's sake; we desire not from you either reward or thanks; we fear from our Lord a frowning, calamitous day!" [11]

In general the virtues stressed in the Koran are such as liberality to the poor and needy, honesty in trading, trustworthiness, justice, kindness, mercy, truthfulness, patience, humility, right treatment of parents. A list of corresponding vices would include murder, infanticide, niggardliness and love of wealth, sexual immorality, pride, partiality, ridiculing, defaming, backbiting, wastefulness. Here and there are to be found summary statements as to what constitutes a good life for the believer:

> Verily, men resigned and women resigned [*resigned* = Moslem], and believing men and believing women, and devout men and devout women, and truthful men and truthful women, and patient men and patient women, and humble men and humble women, and almsgiving men and almsgiving women, and fasting men and fasting

[11] 76:6-10.

women, and men who guard their private parts and women who guard their private parts, and men who remember God much and women who remember Him,—God has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty hire.[18]

Say, 'Come! I will recite what your Lord has forbidden you, that ye may not associate aught with Him, and (may show) kindness to your parents, and not kill your children through poverty;—We will provide for you and them;—and draw not nigh to flagrant sins, either apparent or concealed, and kill not the soul [life] which God hath forbidden save by right; that is what God ordains you, haply ye may understand.'

And draw not nigh unto the wealth of the orphan, save so as to better it, until he reaches full age; and give weight and measure with justice. We do not compel the soul save what it can compass; and when ye pronounce, then be just, though it be in the case of a relative.

And God's compact fulfill ye; that is what He ordained you, haply ye may be mindful. Verily, this is my right way; follow it then, and follow not various paths, to separate yourselves from His way; that is what He has ordained you, haply ye may fear![18]

A more concise summary is the following:

[18] 33:35. [18] 6:151-154.

> But they were not bidden aught but to worship God, being sincere in religion unto Him as 'Hanifs, and to be steadfast in prayer, and to give alms: for that is the standard religion.[14]

I shall quote one other passage of ethical import. Its likeness to sayings of Jesus and Paul in the New Testament will be obvious:

> Good and evil shall not be deemed alike; repel (evil) with what is best, and lo! he between whom and thyself was enmity is as though he were a warm patron.[15]

When reading this one would be glad to forget the bitter invective against opponents which marks so many other surahs. For example the following, an early revelation concerning one of the prophet's uncles who was an enemy of Islam:

> In the name of the merciful and compassionate God. Abu Laheb's two hands shall perish, and he shall perish. His wealth shall not avail him, nor what he has earned! He shall broil in a fire that flames, and his wife carrying faggots!—on her neck a cord of palm fibres.[16]

In this Scripture with a single author we might have expected consistency, but that is too much to expect.

[14] 98:4. [15] 41:34. [16] Surah 111.

The defense presumably would be that those against whom the prophet inveighs so bitterly are God's enemies, not his. Very likely that was his way of looking at it, but unfortunately this has always been the argument of religious bigotry and intolerance. Furthermore it suggests a query as to the character of Mohammed's God. He is constantly proclaimed to be a "merciful and compassionate" God, which apparently has in view His beneficence in creation and providence and His willingness to meet more than half way those who turn to Him with right belief and attempt to do what He requires. For those who do not turn to Him there is not mercy but the fires of hell.

The surah last quoted is by no means the only example in the Koran of revelations somewhat personal in their bearing:

> O ye who believe! do not enter the house of the prophet, unless leave be given you, for a meal,—not watching till it is cooked! But when ye are invited, then enter; and when ye have fed, disperse, not engaging in familiar discourse. Verily, that would annoy the prophet and he would be ashamed for your sake, but God is not ashamed of the truth.[17]

Occidental travelers who have had experience with

[17] 33:53.

Arab ideas of hospitality and privacy can testify to the importance of such a provision as this.

The first part of the 66th surah was evidently called forth by troubles in the prophet's harem, the exact nature of which is uncertain. It has been supposed to refer to an uprising on the part of other wives, one in particular, when a new member was introduced into the circle and received what was deemed undue attention. But Mohammedan apologists have maintained that the occasion of this revelation was an attempt on the part of two of the wives to cure their husband of his fondness for honey.[18] He had finally vowed never to touch it again. Then came the divine word:

> O thou prophet! wherefore dost thou prohibit what God has made lawful to thee, craving to please thy wives? but God is forgiving, compassionate! God has allowed you to expiate your oaths; for God is your sovereign, and He is the knowing, the wise![19]

Farther on in the surah the wives are tactfully reminded of what may happen if they exceed their prerogatives:

> It may be that his Lord if he divorce you will give him in exchange wives better than you, Mus-

[18] See Ameer Ali, *The Spirit of Islam* (London, Christophers, 1922), p. 235.
[19] 66:1-2.

> lims, believers, devout, repentant, worshiping, given to fasting—such as have known men and virgins too.[20]

An event in Mohammed's career which caused great scandal among his contemporaries was his marriage with Zainab, the divorced wife of his adopted son Zaid. What made this act offensive was the fact that according to Arab ideas of the time adopted children stood in essentially the same relation to their parents as real children, so that the relationship was too close for marriage to be permissible. A passage in the 33d surah owes its origin to this affair. I shall quote part of it:

> . . . when Zaid had fulfilled his desire for her We did wed thee to her that there should be no hindrance to the believers in the matter of the wives of their adopted sons when they have fulfilled their desire of them: and so God's bidding to be done.[21]

No doubt there will always be some scepticism, at least among non-Moslems, as to whether the prophet's motive was as wholly altruistic as is here implied. In any case the passage provides an interesting illustration of the relation of parts of the Koran to Mohammed's personal life.

[20] 66:5. [21] 33:38.

For its narrative matter the Mohammedan Scripture is largely dependent on the Jewish-Christian Bible, especially the Old Testament. The dependence is not direct, but it is none the less obvious. On the pages of the Koran we meet with such familiar names as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Pharaoh, David, Solomon, Elijah, Jonah, Jesus, Mary, Zachariah, John. Some of them we meet with very often. There are also names, drawn from Arab lore, which are not so well known to us, but these are less numerous. Superficially regarded the Koran might be thought of as a sort of compendium of the Jewish-Christian Bible. Probably Mohammed had never read any part of it. It is uncertain whether he was able to read. But his mind was evidently saturated with its stories, which had come to him through his contacts with those who knew them.

Naturally the Koranic version of these stories often varies greatly from that of the older Bible. The Jewish or Christian reader finds his familiar heroes doing unfamiliar things. No doubt the incidents are recorded in the Koran as Mohammed believed they happened; in any case the historicity of the characters and events mattered little for his purpose. It was open to him to improve on the work of his predecessors if he could. That he did improve on it, however, would be hard to persuade a non-Moslem. As

stories they certainly have suffered from his handling of them. They are more scrappy, piecemeal, much less intelligible and interesting. The didactic motive of the story-teller is much more obtrusive. The characters and their actions have less independence and originality. The old prophets are little more than other Mohammeds, the people to whom they preach other Meccans. It is not surprising to find in the Koran itself an attempt at censorship of competing stories: a revelation is directed against the buying and reading of "sportive legends," seemingly of Persian origin, which some of the prophet's fellow-tribesmen were finding more interesting and wonderful than his surahs.[22] Yet the literary perfection of the Koran is an axiom with orthodox Moslems.

As to the religious effectiveness of these or any other parts of the Koran there is little that can be said with profit. The matter is too subjective to lend itself to useful discussion. There can be no doubt that the Koran has played an important rôle in the spread of Islam, and the spread of Islam is one of the impressive phenomena of world history. But it is noteworthy that only in the very slightest degree have people of European stock been numbered among the converts. The Jewish-Christian Bible, which also came out of western Asia, has been vastly more successful in win-

[22] 31:5.

ning the allegiance of Europe and thus influencing the trend of the foremost modern cultures. The reverence which millions of Mohammedans feel for their sacred book has back of it traditions and associations which an outsider cannot be expected to understand. He can see, however, that it is in a measure justified by the worth of the book, and he may hope that the bibliolatry of Islam will gradually disappear with other bibliolatries.

In a sense the Koran is a Bible par excellence. In no other body of sacred writings is the Thus-sayeth-the-Lord note so pervasive. What we have here is not hymns of praise to deity, or regulations for appeasing deity through sacrifice, or reflections upon life, or speculations about the ultimate nature of things—though there may be traces of all these familiar elements: what we have is explicit announcements from God as to his commands and purposes, a direct revelation of His will to men. No doubt in the past this characteristic of the Koran has contributed to its prestige; that it can continue to do so is much less certain. The naïve dogmatism of such an attitude is not impressive to the modern mind, and even in Islam the modern mind is beginning to appear. What will serve to insure continued regard for this ancient Arabic book will rather be the fact that it reveals one of the world's outstanding religious personalities, preserves records of the

beginnings of a great religious movement, and contains much good material for the guidance of life.

If the situation were such that we could think of the Koran and the Jewish-Christian Bible as in a race for world supremacy it would seem that the former must find itself handicapped by the narrowness of its range—its lack of variety in style, literary forms, fields of interest, and methods of treatment. But of course the actual situation is different from that. The Old and New Testaments are the Bible of Christians and the Koran is the Bible of Mohammedans, and it seems probable that Christian missionaries, as well as Mohammedan apologists, will have to be content to leave it so. The utter unprofitableness of centering missionary effort on a contest of Bibles—or rather of bibliolatries—has been sufficiently demonstrated.

Christians naturally cannot concede the claim that Mohammed is God's greatest and final Prophet and Apostle—the one to whom beyond all others humanity must look for its leadership. For better or for worse he was a warrior prophet, and it seems to us that a vindictive spirit speaks unmistakably through his words. We prefer to take our stand with Jesus, who refused to take up the sword and prayed for forgiveness for his enemies. Here is the crux of the comparison. Perhaps when those peoples who are supposed to be Jesus' followers have begun really to exemplify his

ideals Islam will be sufficiently impressed to launch upon the same great venture. Meanwhile we shall do well to inquire whether perchance there is not more of good in the Arabian prophet and his book than we have realized; and if our friends of Islam picture both prophet and book in colors that seem to us more attractive than convincing, let us be thankful that they are attractive and not be too much disturbed at their lack of reality to us.

CHAPTER XVIII

CHIEF DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN BIBLE

In one respect at least the Bible of Christianity is unique. It is a compound Scripture, so to speak, embracing the canonical writings of two of the world's great religions. And the point is one of importance. Whatever may be said of either collection separately, taken together the Old and New Testaments constitute a sacred book unusually rich in contents and balanced in outlook. Christians have great reason to be thankful that when the church got out into the Gentile world and became independent of the synagogue it still kept the Jewish Bible. To have failed to retain and hold in highest regard the unique treasures of religious poetry in the Psalms, the literary remains of the great reforming prophets, and the wealth of didactic stories in the narrative books, would have been loss indeed; and it may be added that the practical sense so generally manifested in the Old Testament—the concern with this present world—serves as a valuable offset to the apocalyptic and other-worldly tendencies which are rather strong in the New Testament. On the other hand Christianity has contributed to the joint Scrip-

tures the matchless figure of Jesus, the powerful and arresting personality of Paul, and a new spirit, a *life,* which is felt even when it cannot be described or labeled, and which certainly has had much to do with the influence exerted by this Bible during the past eighteen centuries.

I think it may also be maintained that this body of Scriptures is more *selective* than others—that a larger proportion of its matter has what we may venture to call general and permanent worth. Such a statement needs to be made with caution. Probably no Christian has ever read through his Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, without having something of the feeling that it could be considerably shortened without loss. Yet the Talmud, and the Gnostic writings, and the tomes of the church fathers—which might have been included—are not there. Comparatively speaking, it is a selective Scripture. There is nothing really corresponding, in subject matter and bulk, with the magical Atharva-Veda, the enigmatic Yi-King, or the prolix and scholastic Abhidhamma-pitaka; while the extent and variety of the matter characterized by religious depth or offering sound moral guidance would be hard to parallel. The Koran is smaller, but it will scarcely seem more selective except to those who from infancy have been accustomed to reverence it.

Again, this Bible is distinguished by the *sustained*

progress of religious and moral ideas and practices which it reveals.

The student of Scriptures discovers that deterioration in later strata is a discouragingly frequent phenomenon. The Varuna of the Rig-Veda fails to fulfill his early promise. The lofty religion of Zarathustra, as met with in the Gāthās, degenerates into ritualistic puerilities. In later books of the Tripitaka the altruistic high-mindedness of Gautama is overlaid with legend and obscured by fantastic miracles. Mohammed is a more impressive figure in the tense early surahs than in the more verbose revelations of later years. The distinctively religious note is weaker in the late than in the early books of the King and Shu, however they may compare in other respects.

To claim that this phenomenon of deterioration is entirely non-existent in the Jewish-Christian Bible would be to claim too much. Chronicles, Proverbs, and Daniel—typical late books of the Old Testament—are doubtless not its greatest literature. Hebrews, James, and the Pastoral Epistles—late New Testament books—have not appealed to most Christians as marking the highest level of that collection. Yet every one of the writings named has merit—qualities that make for permanence—and it is further noteworthy that the book of Psalms in the Old Testament and the Fourth Gospel

in the New rank at the same time among the latest and the greatest books in the respective collections. Without attempting to make too much of the point it may at any rate be maintained that return to a high level, after the sterility which is more or less inevitable when a religion gets away from the enthusiasm of its beginnings, is more frequent and more marked in this Bible than in most others.

Once more, we have here a Bible that is *historical* in a farther-reaching sense than any other, with the possible exception of the Confucian books. A substantial proportion of the matter in both the Old and the New Testament is narrative with a basis in history. Furthermore, there is in the New Testament a group of writings—the letters of Paul—which while not themselves historical in character yet are recognized as having been produced in the first few decades of Christianity's existence, and hence having unique value as source material for its primitive history.

Perhaps the fact that this Bible is in such large measure historical has not been an unmixed blessing. Its adherents have tended to identify the question, Is it true? with the much narrower (and for religion less important) question, Does it correspond with historical fact? and this has been unfortunate. Yet the potential value of historical narrative for the guidance of life

is great, and these Jewish and Christian writers have used it effectively. There is no occasion for regret that the space given to it was not devoted to magic formulas, directions for sacrifices, descriptions of heaven and hell, or even the ecstatic utterances of religious mystics.

For the *optimism* of the Jewish-Christian Bible, also, a measure of uniqueness may be claimed. It is a better sustained optimism than that of the Avesta, more reasoned than that of the Koran, and presented with more warmth and fervor than that of the Confucian books. It is true that in the New Testament the "present evil world" is pretty much despaired of, but the effect of this dark outlook is not comparable with the kind of world-rejection which we meet with in the Vedas and the Tripitaka. As Guatama sees life, "Birth is suffering; decay is suffering; illness is suffering; presence of objects we hate is suffering; separation from objects we love is suffering; not to obtain what we desire is suffering; briefly, the fivefold clinging to existence is suffering." [1] Paul also takes a dark view of the life which he sees about him, yet he is convinced that "all things work together for good" to those who love God, if not in the present then in a speedily coming order.[2] The New Testament as a whole has an atmosphere of optimism, confidence; and it is the less surprising

[1] See above, p. 159.

[2] Rom. 8:28.

that multitudes have received strength from reading it.

As regards their *ethical* interest the high rank of the Jewish-Christian Scriptures cannot be questioned. The concern about conduct—right relations between man and man—is perhaps as strong in the King and Shu as in the Old and New Testaments; but in the Chinese books this concern has a narrower range, has to do more with form and less with spirit, and has less of a religious, emotional basis. I think it is quite within the bounds of sober fact to say that in no other body of sacred writings is the attempt to combine religion and ethics so seriously and so successfully made as in our Christian Bible. Here, in unusual degree, the religious emotions are thought of as contributing to good living, and that not only for the few but for the many, not only in the cloister but in the whole round of life's activities. Such typical religious terms as faith and love are found to have surprisingly active connotations: the prevailing idea is that faith should *work*, work in the spirit of love. In a great saying Paul states this point of view, at the same time putting the ceremonial side of religion in a definitely subordinate place: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith working through love." [8]

[8] Gal. 5:6.

In their view of God and the universe these Scriptures are *monotheistic* but not *monistic*. God is one (though there are hosts of other superhuman beings), but the present scheme of things is thought of as a duality rather than a unity. Evil as well as good is real and must be reckoned with. This is also the view of the earlier parts of the Avesta, and no Bible can claim to uphold it more strenuously than does the Koran. But to many it will seem that the Jewish-Christian Bible upholds it more appealingly, and with a lesser preponderance of dogmatic naïveté. What we have here is the conception of a God akin in character to what is best in man, furthering this best with vast power yet Himself struggling the while with forces of opposite character. The contest is long, as man counts time, but to the men of faith who have written these books the issue is not in doubt. The future is with God, and with those who take their stand with Him.

As to whether such a view is tenable—and the optimism which proceeds from it justifiable—I shall merely remark that it seems to have met the pragmatic test better than any of its rivals. It avoids the intellectual and moral confusion of polytheism on the one hand and the extreme passivity which is likely to go with pantheism on the other side. Life must be built on some kind of a hypothesis, and it does not appear that a better one than this has yet been shown to us.

Its optimism is at least as well grounded in known fact as that which rests on the easy assumption of a "law of progress." [4]

We have said that this Bible is markedly historical. It remains to be pointed out that it is also strikingly *biographical.* Unforgettable personalities live and move on its pages, to an extent far beyond that of any other body of canonical writings. It serves as the mouthpiece of an unparalleled succession of great religious seers, thinkers, and leaders: Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, John the Baptist, Paul, and the "John" of the Fourth Gospel—to mention only some names that stand out with especial prominence. Many other figures which are not of the first rank nevertheless are vividly alive, and the stories about them carry impressive lessons; so, for example, Jacob, Saul, Solomon, Elijah, Peter. Whether there are other Bibles that contain as many personal names as this one is unimportant; the noteworthy thing is that here is such a portrait gallery of living men and women as is not to be found in other Scriptures. The pictures are of course touched up by the several writers, however unconsciously. The treatment is always more or less didactic; the moral is ever in view. Yet the subjects remain real, human, individual. It is perhaps by reason of this biographical characteristic of our Bible more

[4] *Cf.* above, pp. 133ff.

than any other that Coleridge's testimony, "It *finds* me," has been so widely echoed.

And in this connection we come to the last and greatest thing to be said about the Jewish-Christian Scriptures. They enshrine the most significant figure of religious history, whom they present with unparalleled simplicity and effectiveness—Jesus of Nazareth. The notion of this entire Bible as "Christo-centric" is not entirely fanciful. To a remarkable degree Old Testament trends and interests find a focal point in the person and teachings of Jesus. The mysticism of the Psalms, the practical ethics of Proverbs, the social ideals and reforming zeal of the prophets, and the apocalypticism of Daniel—all these are combined in the youthful Nazarene. And if it is fancy it is a beautiful fancy which has led his followers to see in his death on the cross a final spiritualizing and ethicizing of the Old Testament idea of sacrifice—a goal toward which the great prophets had long ago been moving.

As to the New Testament pictures of Jesus it is at any rate to be said that *he is there.* There are extensive overlays, valuable in themselves but often baffling to the critical student who would see Jesus. But criticism has definitely passed the stage at which it was felt that he was not and could not be known. When we compare the Gospels with analogous parts of other Scriptures we are impressed with the relative

simplicity and clearness of their portraits. If we try to harmonize the several records we meet with confusion and contradiction at various points; about much that we would like to know there is silence. Yet it remains true that Jesus is present in, *lives* in, dominates the New Testament—a figure baffling but also real, appealing, challenging, inescapable. His presence in it must be reckoned the outstanding point in a comparison of the Jewish-Christian Bible with other Bibles.

PART III

THE INFLUENCE OF BIBLES

CHAPTER XIX

THE INFLUENCE OF BIBLES IN THE PAST

A. Limitations to Their Influence

It is possible to overestimate the influence which Scriptures have exerted. For one thing they have always had to contend with the obstacle of ignorance, especially illiteracy. With an illiterate people the Bibles could exert their influence only at second hand, priests or scribes or other professional religionists acting as intermediaries. And the proportion of illiteracy, among the peoples and over the period covered by the history of Scriptures, has been very large.

Further, there have been a number of parallel forces which have exerted an influence in a measure rivaling and offsetting the influence of Bibles.

(1) *Art.* Images, pictures, dramas, temples, musical liturgy, etc., have played an enormously important rôle in the religion of the masses almost everywhere. Widgery notes that

> Throughout much of their earlier development at least, religion and art influenced one another immensely: religious ideas and feelings supplied

> the motive to the artist, and the work of art inspired the onlooker with similar emotions. . . . In as far as the objects of religious adoration make their appeal to the masses of the people the study of these objects is sometimes more helpful for a comparative study of the actual religious feelings of the masses than a perusal of the sacred Scriptures, which, except in very recent years, could be used only by a small proportion of the adherents of any religion.[1]

He cites Buddhism as

> an excellent illustration of the different impression which might be obtained on the one hand from the canonical Scriptures, and on the other from its art and practice, and how vital it is for an adequate study of the religion that one be made to supplement the other.[2]

Pretty much the same would be true, though perhaps in lesser degree, of Catholic Christianity. In both the Greek and Roman churches, through the greater part of their history, art has been a foremost means of mediating religious satisfactions to the laity. Dependence on the Bible, in comparison, has been secondary and indirect. The recent Eucharistic Congress in Chicago serves as a reminder of the effective use

[1] *Op.* cit., pp. 24f. [2] *Idem.*

which religious bodies may make of pageantry and related forms of art. In Protestantism the Bible, as over against art, has held a much larger place, but it is by no means certain that this situation will continue. In the recent past Protestant churches have been giving increased attention to the artistic factor in church architecture and in services of worship, while the interest in religious drama has been another sign of the times.

As far as direct influence is concerned art—pictorial, sculptural, architectural, dramatic, musical—almost certainly has played a more important rôle in religion than Scriptures have. But it is to be remembered that indirect influences may in the long run be the more potent. Through the medium of ritual, dogma, sermons, etc., the Bibles have made themselves felt to a degree probably greater than we realize.

(2) *Tradition and Creeds.* We have seen that Scripture has almost invariably had as an accompaniment a body of Tradition—theoretically a supplement, actually more or less of a rival.[8] So, for example, in Brahmanism, Judaism, Islam, and Catholic Christianity. Just how much Tradition has affected the influence of Scriptures is impossible to say. It has not stood in the way of the glorification of Scriptures, as the record of the Pharisees in Judaism and of Sunnite doctors in

[8] See above, Chap. VII.

Islam is enough to show, but in the matter of actual influence it certainly has been to some extent a rival. Jesus accused some of the Pharisees of neglecting vital commandments of the Scriptures while stressing comparatively unimportant injunctions of their Tradition,[4] and the same tendency has made itself felt elsewhere. The Tradition, being later, is likely to be more easily understood by the professional interpreters and more congenial to them, so that when one or the other has to endure neglect or misinterpretation it is usually the Scriptures which suffer.

When a part of the Tradition assumes the form of a creed or creeds the relation to Scripture takes on a special aspect. The intention of the makers of creedal formulas has usually been to epitomize Scripture teachings and so facilitate their understanding and use, but their efforts in this direction have not been markedly successful. To an unfortunate extent the creeds have tended to prevent the Scriptures from speaking with their own voice, or rather voices. They have brought into the foreground the outlook of the particular age and group which produced the creed, and in so doing have made it more difficult for their adherents to get a clear view of the varied materials which the Scriptures themselves contain. But this phenomenon, as noted in Chapter VII, is confined mainly to Christianity.

[4] Matt. 15:1ff.

Moreover its actual effect, as a limitation to the influence of the Bible, has not always been as serious as might have been expected. It does not appear that those Protestant bodies which have placed most stress on creeds have on the whole received less good from the Bible, or used it more harmfully, than others.

(3) *Other literature.* In the formation of all the great canons there has been an influential body of literature left outside. And as centuries have rolled by other books have appeared which, without bidding for canonicity or even winning a place in the Tradition, have rivaled the Scriptures themselves in the prestige which they have acquired. This applies particularly to

> certain books of devotion which are so widely used and have obtained so deep an influence, that they have almost obtained a footing of equality with the Bibles; for instance the Book of Rewards and Punishments in modern China, the Bhagavad Gita among the Indian Vaishnavas, and among Christians the Imitatio Christi by Thomas à Kempis and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.[5]

In the case of the Christian peoples of Europe and America it is to the point to refer also to the vast influence which has been exerted, directly and indirectly, by the Greek and Latin classics.[6] And the enormous

[5] Chantepie de la Saussaye, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
[6] *Cf.* above.

output of the printing presses in the recent past must be reckoned with. In Western Christendom since the invention of printing the body of extra-biblical literature exerting a potent influence on life has constantly increased. As a result the influence of the Bible has become proportionately less, whether or not it has suffered an actual decrease in prestige.

These are some of the forces which in the past have paralleled the force exerted by the canonical Scriptures in influencing human progress. Important as the Bibles have been they have not had the field to themselves.

B. Influence for the Worse

Nor can it be claimed for the Scriptures that their influence has been altogether beneficent. There is a profound truth in Paul's saying that "what is written kills." [7] Scriptures are, in a real sense, a dangerous possession.

However, the danger does not inhere in the books themselves, but in the idea which has attached itself to them in the canon-forming process: the idea of "books invested with divine authority, containing the whole truth revealed by God, and from which no one may presume to deviate." [8] In other words, the bad

[7] II Cor. 3:6; Goodspeed's translation.
[8] Tiele, *op. cit.*, I, 134.

influences which may be attributed to Scriptures should rather be attributed to bibliolatry. Of this we have already had somewhat to say.[9] Such a conception of sacred writings leads all too readily to a deadening formalism, the living spirit of religion being crushed by the dead letter. It becomes an obstacle in the way of progress not only in religion but in the whole field of culture. It tends to yield intolerance and persecution. It is conducive to distorted reasoning. These are some of the dangers to which a religious group subjects itself when it adopts the idea of Scripture in its more extreme form.

On the other hand, from the literature itself there is little to be feared. All of the ancient Bibles reveal levels of thought and practice which are lower than those reached by the more enlightened communities of our time; but aside from the theories, interpretations, and dogmas which have attached themselves to them, it does not appear that particular harm has resulted therefrom.

Perhaps as bad a case could be made out for the Koran as for any other Bible. A recent European writer, speaking of the Turks, says:

> The Koran has been the cause of their backwardness, the blight on their progress and admin-

[9] See above, Chap. V.

> istration. . . . Education and the Koran cannot coexist.[10]

But this writer seems practically to identify the Koran and traditional Islam. In the same issue of the periodical in which his article appears is another by a Turk, who looks at the matter differently. He holds that the period of the Prophet and the four caliphs following him was

> the most fruitful period of Islam—fruitful precisely because our faith was not corrupted by the absurdities that have been grafted upon it subsequently. It was pure, it was crystalline. Its followers sought their inspiration solely in the holy scriptures. They went directly to the very men who were the sources of knowledge.

Later the religious schools and monasteries were created

> to preserve Islam in its original purity, to give every true believer an opportunity of receiving the inspiration of the Koran. . . . For a time they did perform these services. And so long as they did that, Islamism was the unsullied sun of humanity.[11]

[10] *The Living Age,* July 24, 1926, an anonymous article from the *London Saturday Review.*

[11] *Ibid.,* article by Agha Oghlu Ahmed, Deputy from Kars in the Grand National Assembly, writing in a semi-official daily of Angora.

When they neglected their true function Islam was eclipsed, etc. Thus the article proceeds.

Doubtless this picture of primitive Islam is idealized, as pictures of primitive Christianity have often been, but on the question of the relation of the Mohammedan Bible to the demoralized state of modern Turkey the Turk is probably at least as near the truth as the European. That the demoralization is chiefly traceable to the Koran is far from self-evident.

In short, history shows that much evil has been wrought by a rigid conception of Scriptures, and the consequent misuse of them, but it is not clear that any of the great sacred collections has in itself been productive of serious harm.

C. Influence for the Better.

A great deal might be said on this side. In three directions, in particular, the Bibles of mankind have exerted powerful influence for good.

(1) They have greatly stimulated the progress of learning and culture. Reference was made to this in an earlier chapter.[12] It is not as generally realized as it should be.

> Early Moslem science sprang from the Koran, and the later Moslem discussions of free-will, immortality, and other points were called forth by

[12] See above, p. 88.

> Koranic statements. The philosophical writings of Maimonides, produced under Greek influence (through Moslem translations of Aristotle), were directed to the elucidation of Old Testament ideas. The contributions of modern Christians, Jews, Moslems, and Parsis to knowledge, sacred books being the occasions, are numerous and important.[18]

The point here is that the Bibles have furnished the occasion, the starting point, for investigations which have contributed enormously to human learning and culture. Unfortunately the guardians of the Bibles, in some religions, have been wont to erect a "thus far and no farther" sign before the investigations had more than got under way. But in the long run such signs have not availed. The studies started under the stimulus of Scripture have gone on and produced rich fruits of knowledge to be used for the benefit of humanity.

(2) They have served as a guide and an inspiration to religious progress. Tiele discusses this point in an eloquent passage which is worth quoting at length:

> Yet, while we may have a horror of inquisitions, and be convinced that all religious persecution and coercion of conscience is of the Evil One, we may admit that the collection of the oldest records

[18] Toy, *op. cit.*, pp. 561f.; see also von Dobschütz in *ERE* II, 611-615.

into one sacred Volume, and the ascription to it of a very special value, have promoted the development of religion, and have indeed been its necessary instrument, especially when mankind was still in a state of pupillarity and barbarism. A wholesome curb was thus placed upon the young community, restraining it from too great deviation from its original character, the beautiful traditions of the heroic period of their origin, the remembrance of their "first love," was thus more securely preserved; the priceless memorials were therefore treasured up with extraordinary care; and people therefore deemed it necessary to be constantly occupied with them and to interpret them for edification and instruction, as testifying with irrefragable authority against the encroachment of abuses. No progress can be permanent unless rooted in the highest development of the past, and this can only be learned from the Scriptures. If the unbridled fancy of the believer forms all sorts of irrational notions about the origin of these Scriptures, through which veneration becomes worship and even idolatry, or if a reactionary priesthood is jealous for the letter without understanding the spirit, or if the ignorant multitude is satisfied with mere sounds, and degrades the venerable heirloom to the position of a fetish, yet there will always be some who penetrate more deeply into these records, and who there discover the

> treasures hidden from most other people. And such persons, as soon as the time is ripe for a new manifestation of religious sentiments, for a new revelation of the religious conception, and for a new form of religious community, constitute the links between a great past and an entirely new era. And when from the despised Nazareth, whence nothing good could come, the dawn of a new life shines upon humanity, or when the light of divine truth, hidden for ages by selfishness, obscured by ignorance, and clouded by superstition, suddenly bursts forth with renewed brightness in the soul of a Wycliffe or a Luther, the source of that light may be traced to earnest searchings of the Scriptures in the Galilean village and in the cloister and the cell, and to the profound impression made by them upon devout souls.[14]

Two statements in this passage are worthy of special note. One is that "No progress can be permanent unless rooted in the highest development of the past, and this can only be learned from the Scriptures." Is it true, particularly the latter part? Not wholly true, as stated. What Tiele presumably means is that a great Bible invariably reflects, in one fashion or another, the high level reached by the religion in its golden age, and that this gives it unique value as providing

[14] Tiele, *op. cit.*, I, 135f.

a norm for later development. But to strip the statement of exaggeration is not to destroy its force. In a large and important sense the Bibles of mankind *are* the depositories of the race's great religious experiences and discoveries, and as such they have proved themselves indispensable as guides in the onward way.

The other statement is that the source of the light brought to humanity by the great religious innovators—as Jesus, Wycliffe, Luther—"may be traced to earnest searchings of the Scriptures . . . and to the profound impression made by them." Again the statement should not be accepted thoughtlessly. Is it true? How largely is it true? I think it is possible to overstate the importance of the Jewish Scriptures in the life and work of Jesus, and the importance of the Jewish-Christian Scriptures in the life and work of Luther. Yet undoubtedly their rôle was important—very important. We may think in the same connection of Confucius, of Mohammed, and of Paul, not to mention lesser names. Clearly religious beginnings as well as religious progress have been influenced by Scriptures: they have proved themselves able not only to guide but to inspire.

(3) They have preserved and made comparatively accessible great stores of food for the deeper life of man. Here, as in the case of the beneficent influences already noted, we have to thank not only the books

themselves but also the conception of them as sacred Scriptures. That conception has been largely responsible for their preservation, for their accessibility as compared with other books of value, for the fact that multitudes of people have used and been profited by their treasures who otherwise would have lacked such a source of help and strength. The divine authority with which they have been invested has not only led to their use in ritual and sermons but has given them a favored position as textbooks in schools, as matter for devotional reading and study in homes and in community circles, as the *vade mecum* of earnest individuals.

It goes without saying that not all Scriptures—nor all parts of the same Scripture—have been equally fruitful in this sort of beneficence. Doubtless much the largest proportion of such influence has been exerted by a small fraction of the matter regarded as canonical. But it is also to be remembered that this is a place where logical cogency, or other intellectual considerations, have little weight. The depth of man's nature, to which these ancient writings have appealed so successfully, is emotional rather than intellectual, and matter which to the critical modern intelligence seems worthless may in the past have fed the souls of multitudes.

The good which has been accomplished by the Scriptures, in thus providing storehouses of food for the

inner lives of men, is incalculable. No complete monopoly of such influence is to be claimed for them. We have only to think of the Bhavagad-Gita and *Pilgrim's Progress* to be reminded that in their beneficent work they have had worthy competitors. Yet it is probably safe to say that taking the past as a whole what the Bibles have wrought in this direction has surpassed the influence of all other books combined.

CHAPTER XX

THE PLACE OF BIBLES IN THE RELIGION OF TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

We may begin by reviewing the last chapter with the present topic in view. We noted that in the past there have been certain limitations to the influence of Scriptures, that they have exerted certain influences for the worse, and certain other influences for the better. To what extent does this situation of the past still exist to-day, and give promise of existing to-morrow?

First the limitations, the parallel forces more or less rivaling the Bibles in their influence: art, tradition and creeds, and other literature. All are still potent, though with varying degrees of potency in different religions and varying promise for the future. It would seem at present that tradition and creed are declining forces, while art and other literature give promise of increasing in prestige. There is scarcely room for doubt that this is the outlook in Protestant Christianity, and other religions appear likely, sooner or later, to move in the same direction.

As to influences for the worse, the situation of yesterday is with us yet, but it is safe to predict that it will not be with us so much to-morrow. The conception of Scripture which has been the source of most of the trouble is still widely held, and it still yields the fruits of formalism, distorted reasoning, and intolerance; but it is clearly on the decline. It must give way before the advance of culture—there is abundant evidence that it is giving way. And with the bibliolatrous regard for Bibles out of the way there is little reason for fearing them—even a spurious Bible such as the Book of Mormon.

Under the head of influences for the better we have credited the Bibles, in the past, with having stimulated the progress of learning and culture, served as a guide and an inspiration to religious progress, and preserved and made comparatively accessible invaluable food for the deeper life of man. What is to be said for these several values from the point of view of the present and the future?

The first must be admitted to be a declining influence, though there are still some who from Bible studies are led into wider fields of scholarship in which they do important work.

Perhaps the second is also a declining influence, though this is less obvious. It is still true that religious progress, or any other kind of progress, needs to be

"rooted in the highest development of the past," but this will not mean in the future, as much as it has hitherto, that such progress must be rooted in Scriptures. The great developments of the past now have other witnesses, in increasing number. And it is not altogether certain that the new Luther for whom our age is looking, if he comes and when he comes, will have been influenced by the Scriptures to the extent to which Luther was. Yet there is reason for believing that in such religious progress as lies ahead of us the Bibles will still have their rôle to play. It will be long indeed before Buddhists cease to look back for guidance and inspiration to Buddha, Confucianists to Confucius, or Mohammedans to Mohammed; and the Christian conviction that Jesus holds the key to the future, though it changes in form, seems likely to endure through yet other millenniums. It is to be expected that the Bibles will in a measure share the immortality of the great figures which they enshrine.

In the third sphere of influence, as in the second, the Scriptures have more competition than formerly. A multitude of books, readily accessible, offer food for the soul. Some of them are able to make good the offer. Yet in this competition the Bibles seem to be holding their own. It is not for nothing that they have undergone a sifting process through centuries. Much of what is retained is doubtless inferior, but there

is also much that has grown out of fundamental issues of life and has lasting value for life—much that is not readily replaced as food for the soul of man. Probably it is here, more than anywhere else, that the great Bibles will prove their permanence. And no sphere of influence is greater than this. The individual is and must remain the key to the whole problem of human betterment—more particularly the emotional, largely subconscious, life of the individual. A literature which has proved its ability to nourish this life need not fear speedy extinction.

During the age of rationalism through which we have recently passed the Bibles seemed to be under a serious handicap because they were so lacking in logical sequence and development. They have speculative thought, as in the Upanishads, and they have sententious thought, as in Proverbs and the Chinese classics; but of sustained discussion of a theme, approaching by logical steps to a reasoned conclusion—after the manner, let us say, of Plato or Aristotle—the Bibles have not much to offer. At present, however, this logical deficiency does not seem as serious as it seemed to some in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Apparently we are passing out of the age of rationalism: the world of emotion, of feeling, is coming into its own. Perhaps this may be expected to give a new lease of life to bodies of literature which have always

owed much of their prestige to their emotional appeal when used in liturgies. At any rate coming generations will be less likely to scorn them as not being logical.

Yet no doubt it would be the judgment of many thoughtful people in our time that Scriptures have only an insecure and doubtful place in the religion of to-morrow. One reason for such a judgment we have already referred to frequently: the vast increase of other good literature. Another reason is the decline of the conception of religion of which the very idea of Scriptures may be said to be a part. These are inescapable and important considerations, but it is possible to be too hasty in drawing conclusions from them. As a matter of fact the increase of other literature does not seem to be driving Scriptures off the field. Figures for the annual sale of Bibles are impressive, and are not to be waved aside as proving only the persistent force of custom and superstition. And the changed conception of religion has an aspect that is favorable to Scriptures, as well as one that in a sense is opposed to them. The favorable aspect is to be seen in the emphasis on religious experience, present *and past,* as the great source of religious truth. As unique depositories of past religious experience the Bibles may be expected to retain for themselves an important place in the religion of to-morrow.

In any case the friends of the Bibles have nothing to gain by worrying over their fancied loss of prestige, or attempting artificial stimulation of interest in them. Attempts to provide improved translations, introductions, and explanations are praiseworthy. They should help to give the Scriptures a fair chance to make their own impression—to contribute whatever of guidance and inspiration they have to contribute to the modern man and our modern life. For the rest, I would repeat that Bibles are not religion's only resources. They never have been so. And if the fact is now more fully recognized than formerly, that is something for which religious leaders may well be thankful. God speaks to man with many voices. The possible stimuli of the religious attitude toward life are as many as are life's experiences. It is for us to enter fully into this rich heritage.

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Eakin, Frank, 1885-
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